

PACIFIC JOURNAL OF THEOLOGY

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Theological Community

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"Contextualisation" de la Formation
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Dimensions of Learning

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Christian Responses to the 1990 Fiji
Constitution

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PACIFIC JOURNAL OF THEOLOGY

Policy Statement

The Pacific Journal of Theology is published twice a year by Lotu Pasifika Productions on behalf of the South Pacific Association of Theological Schools. The Journal aims at strengthening and stimulating theological thinking and writing by Christians living in the Pacific Islands and sharing it with people of the Pacific and of the rest of the world. It is intended for teachers and students in theological schools, pastors, priests and ministers in village and town congregations and all who want to be challenged to think through their faith in changing times.

The Editorial Committee welcomes various kinds of writing which express an emerging Pacific Theology. These include:

- * Original articles in the traditional theological disciplines;
- * Articles relating theological thinking to Pacific cultures, contemporary issues, other academic disciplines;
- * Helpful material for pastors (worship, pastoral, educational, etc.);
- * Cultural and artistic expressions of the Christian faith;
- * Notes and reviews of books of special relevance to Pacific Islands Christians;
- * Notes and news about theological education and activities in the region.

The Pacific Journal of Theology thus seeks to strengthen the relationship between the Churches in the region and foster the unity of God's people.

Notes for Contributors

The Editors will consider for publication all manuscripts of scholarly standard and in keeping with the overall policy of the Journal. Poetry, photographs, black and white drawings are also welcome. Articles should be clearly typed in double spacing on one side of the paper only. Any sources quoted or referred to should be listed in a bibliography at the end of the article including author, title, publisher and date of publication. Please include brief biographical data you wish to have published.

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FROM THE EDITOR

In February of this year many of our Pacific church leaders travelled to Canberra for the seventh Assembly of the World Council of Churches (WCC). Its theme, introduced in advance to a number of Pacific churches through Bible studies, liturgical expressions and prayers, was 'Come, Holy Spirit - Renew the Whole Creation.' This focus on the work of the Holy Spirit in the Pacific prompted us at the Journal to compile a sampling of presentations made at the two recent consultations on Spiritual Formation (1989 & 1990) held for principals of the 16 theological colleges which are members of the South Pacific Association of Theological Schools (SPATS).

A number of thought-provoking insights emerged from the many hours of tapes of these consultations (of which we have space for only a few highlights in this issue). But perhaps the tenor of the consultations can be captured in Russell Chandran's insistence in his presentation that spirituality has nothing to do with being otherworldly: quite the contrary, it is whatever happens when we are open to the power of the Holy Spirit.

Or, as Sevatii Tuwere states in his presentation, spirituality is 'life itself;' it is 'how we order our lives, or our community, or our college, so that it faithfully reflects God...who faithfully reflects the human situation.' For Pacific peoples, this means that there can be no understanding of the inbreaking of the Holy Spirit without a corollary critical appraisal of the role which culture plays in our lives. Spirituality is rooted in community, it is expressed and interpreted in the midst of historical realities.

But just as spirituality does not exist apart from culture, it also cannot be understood apart from an awareness of the individual psyche, according to Makario Waqanivalu's presentation. Spiritual formation (particularly with reference to *ministerial* formation) must be accompanied by self-awareness - a kind of psychological discernment - if we are to understand the complexities of the motivations for our actions.

In short, the three presentations we have included in this issue of the Journal point out that the work of the Holy Spirit embraces all aspects of the self, the community, and even the groaning of creation itself. This earthly focus is

echoed even in Russell Chandran's reviews of two recent WCC publications related to the 'doing of theology in community.' As a Latin American theologian states in one of these books, spirituality in all Third World contexts is something which 'springs from practical commitments.'

We in the Pacific churches now find ourselves sandwiched in between this WCC Assembly focus on the renewing work of the Holy Spirit - which we follow up on with reflections by a Samoan Pacific Theological College student who was an Assembly steward and Bishop Leslie Boseto, plus excerpts from a key Assembly address - and the upcoming Pacific Conference of Churches (PCC) Assembly in Vanuatu in August of this year. In many ways the theme of the PCC Assembly ('Born into a Living Hope, Proclaiming a Living Hope') flows logically from our recent reflections on the Holy Spirit. For us in the Pacific, the work of the Holy Spirit *is*, in part, 'living hope.' At the same time, there is an 'already-not yet' dialectic in the way this hope is experienced by Pacific Christians, as they confront a host of unjust situations which might be expected to create only hopelessness. As we prepare for a renewal of our proclamation and embodiment of hope at the PCC Assembly, we welcome the Old and New Testament reflections on the Assembly theme by PTC lecturers Pothin Wete and David Esterline.

Those of use who combine our efforts to work on the Journal are dyed-in-the-wool practitioners of hope. We have to be! It can be a daunting task to persuade fellow-workers in the Pacific theological community to read - let alone purchase - *something else* in the midst of the overwhelming demands of ministry and theological education. In this light, I highly commend to you Michael O'Connor's address to the 1990 graduates of Pacific Regional Seminary. Part of this stimulating piece is a bold challenge to the rationales often given for 'why Pacific people don't read.' Among these is his assertion that we are living in a complex situation in which the past (including cherished Pacific oral traditions) 'is inadequate to deal completely with the modern world.' For this and other compelling reasons, O'Connor admonishes his young graduands with these words: 'If one is truly committed to God's people, continuing to read and to learn will be one of your priorities.'

This is certainly our priority and our hope at the Journal. We therefore urge you to pass the Journal along to friends, especially to pastors, theological students and other church workers. It is through this medium that we can continue to discover and uncover what it means to 'do theology' in the Pacific context.

As this is my first issue as Editor of the Journal, I wish to express my gratitude to the outgoing Editor, Bruce Deverell, for the strong foundation he has laid and for his willingness to share his wealth of knowledge and experience in the Pacific. In the spirit of hope, I look forward to working with the editorial assistant, the editorial board and consultants, and all future contributors and readers who, together, will share in this important process of reflection about the relevance of the Gospel for the Pacific.

Lydia Johnson-Hill
Pacific Theological College
Suva

PACIFIC JOURNAL OF THEOLOGY

30TH ANNIVERSARY ISSUE

The first issue of the Pacific Journal of Theology was published in Western Samoa in 1961. It has not been produced continuously since then and this current series, which began in 1989, is therefore the second series.

The Editorial Board would like to celebrate this occasion with a focus on Samoa. Contributions for this theme - original papers on aspects of Samoan theology, church life and history, art work - are welcome and should be sent to us by 31 August. Comments from readers giving impressions on this current series are also invited. (See page (i) *Notes for Contributors* regarding format.)

SPIRITUAL FORMATION IN THE PACIFIC

Spiritual Formation has been an area in which principals of the member schools of the South Pacific Association of Theological Schools (SPATS) have asked for assistance in recent years. In 1989 this was addressed for the first time with a three-day gathering of principals in Fiji. The event, sponsored by the Programme on Theological Education of the World Council of Churches, was successful in highlighting the dual need for a more in-depth consideration of what 'spiritual formation' means in the Pacific and for greater participation from the schools in this process of discernment.

Responding to these needs, SPATS and the Pacific Conference of Churches sponsored a one-week consultation for principals and principals' wives in Suva in 1990. It was the first time a Pacific ecumenical organisation had invited this kind of participation from women, facilitating a programme that included their sharing of ideas and reflecting alongside their husbands. This proved to be an inspired move, one that recognised the vital energy and commitment these women express as persons who are co-responsible for the day-to-day running of Pacific theological schools.

We present here three of the key papers presented during these consultations. (The second is also published in French.) In the first Russell Chandran reflects on how awareness of spiritual needs in the life of the community has developed during his years of involvement with theological education. This awareness is being born in a setting where the academic dimension is often well organised, but where insights into personal development are newer and not so well understood. The integration of these two areas is one of the challenges beginning to be faced in Pacific theological schools.

Sevati Tuwere then explores cultural resources for spirituality. He points out that spirituality cannot be separated from the social context, noting that, 'For us in the Pacific, to explore spirituality is, on the one hand, to explore who God is in the Pacific and, on the other, the kind of environment we have ...(and) the kind of life that our people in the villages live.'

The third paper, by Makario Waqanivalu, applies insights from psychology to

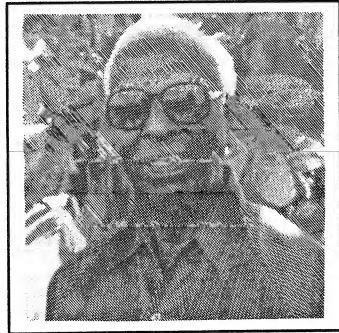
spiritual formation. His approach represents a new dimension of spirituality for many Pacific churches, especially those in the Protestant tradition. He focuses on God's call and our response, particularly our freedom to respond, our self-awareness, and our motivations for ministry. Six titles for further reading on psychological themes related to spirituality close this section.

THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IN THE THEOLOGICAL COMMUNITY

J. Russell Chandran

Dimensions of Ministerial Formation

I was involved in theological education for many years and, as I look back, one of the concerns which came up for consideration again and again was the spiritual life of the community, not only of students but of faculty as well. This is true of most theological school communities. Theological colleges and seminaries are engaged in an important task of preparing men and women for the ministry and mission of the churches, and over the years different components



Russell Chandran

have been identified as necessary. At one time the main accent used to be on what was known as *academic excellence*. Academic study was regarded as necessary in the task of preparing people for the ministry and the highest standards of academic excellence were sought for. Then along with that they also recognised the need for what was known as *ministerial formation* or professional formation. This word formation often needs some explanation. There is no mystery associated with that word; it only describes the process of the taking shape of the person with adequate preparation for the task.

So the concern for academic excellence was described as academic formation or intellectual formation, the taking shape of the student's understanding of the varied tasks of ministry. This includes a knowledge of the Christian heritage. Then ministerial formation is the taking shape of the skills needed for the exercise of ministry. Here again, there are many elements, beginning with the

simple task of leading people in worship, teaching people to pray, to preach and communicate the gospel, to teach, to counsel, to prepare people for confirmation, marriage and other different stages in the life of the people. All that was included in what is known as ministerial formation - the professional skills needed for the ministry.

Then came an equally important concern, namely a concern for *personal development*. The person should have certain qualities, qualities of integrity, qualities of commitment, qualities of relating with other people, people of different sexes. Personal formation concerns the development of maturity, the psychological aspects, the social aspects. But we cannot assume that simply because a person has received a call, and has come to be equipped in the theological college, that he or she has achieved personal formation. He or she needs careful assessment and guidance and it is here that the whole area of interpersonal relationships has to be dealt with. The teachers concerned have to help and also to seek the help of other senior members in the church leadership in the community, to assist with this task of guiding the person to grow in maturity.

The 'Spiritual' in Spiritual Formation

Along with these three dimensions of academic formation, professional or ministerial formation, and personal formation, the concern for spirituality has been recognised as an important component. This has taken on special importance during the last three or more decades, all over the world. The 1982 World Council of Churches' Assembly in Vancouver recognised this widespread concern in all theological communities about spiritual development, the spiritual life of candidates for ministry and the spiritual life of the whole theological community. And, following Vancouver, PTE (the WCC's Programme on Theological Education) has arranged consultations on spiritual formation in different regions of the world. One was recently held in Indonesia, for which SPATS also sent participants.

Now this term *spiritual formation* was formerly more frequently used by the Roman Catholic seminaries. The Protestants were a little shy of using that expression, even though the concern for spirituality and spiritual life, worship, devotion was recognised all over. But the PTE, looking at this phenomenon broadly, took courage in using that expression, and organised consultations around that terminology. Here again, the term 'spiritual formation' is nothing mysterious. It is a very simple convenient way of describing a concern. The concern is the importance of spiritual life for those exercising ministry, and therefore for those who are preparing for the ministry. Without the spiritual

commitment all our theological education has no substance, no meaning.

Here of course the word 'spiritual' needs careful understanding, because of the wrong usage of the term. Very often people assume that spirituality means something away from the world, something away from the material. And this has had its ill effects in a wrong orientation to spirituality, wrong concepts of piety, wrong concepts of devotional life, which Jesus very strongly condemned. People saying long prayers thought they were very spiritual, but Jesus said 'nonsense, that is not what prayer is for!' Jesus himself drew attention to an important dimension of God's work through the Holy Spirit, and the work of the Holy Spirit is what spirituality is about.

The Spirit as Reshaper of the Theological Community

In other words, spiritual life and spirituality really mean being open to the work of the Holy Spirit so that the Holy Spirit can take control of our lives and reshape us. And those who are called to be ministers of the Gospel are also called to be servants in that task of helping people to be open to the Holy Spirit. And unless we know how the Holy Spirit can work in us and are open to it, we cannot help others to be open.

In this regard, what Larry Hannan has said is significant - the importance of *testament*. We should be able to give evidence of how we have allowed the Holy Spirit to take control of our lives and reshape us. It should be clear how it has led us to love and to be able to relate ourselves harmoniously with other people. All that is what the Holy Spirit does in and through us.

In other words, spiritual formation is only a convenient way of describing this whole area of concern where, in our theological work, preparing people for the ministry, we take the Holy Spirit and its work seriously. And the Holy Spirit is a living reality, the Holy Spirit is never static, and that is why spirituality can never be a static phenomenon. Hence what the community evolves one year may be out of date next year. So in planning for spiritual life we can never simply copy what we did previously.

That is one of the things we learnt in our work in Bangalore, when the faculty used to come together and talk about our spiritual life, devotional life, worship life. We realised, to our surprise, that we should constantly be reviewing our spiritual life, willing to learn new things and to reshape our whole structure. That is what is implied in this convenient term *spiritual formation*.

THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION ON THE CONTEXTUALISATION OF SPIRITUAL FORMATION

Sevati Tuwere

I want to do two things. The first is to share with you some theological insights, and the second is to explore some cultural resources for spirituality, and perhaps suggest one model for using these resources.

Now I must admit that I come with some assumptions. I assume that you already know what spirituality is all about, because a consultation was held last year and therefore the theme of the subject should make some sense to a good many of us.



Sevati Tuwere

A Working Definition of Spirituality

I also approach the subject with some degree of alarm, because I personally feel that the subject of spirituality is not a doctrine and it's not a theology, it is life itself, it is how we feel in our daily lives, how we behave in our daily lives. And that moves me on to, if you like, a working definition of spirituality. It is how we order our lives, or our community, or our college so that it faithfully reflects God, who has revealed Himself in Jesus, on the one hand, and who faithfully reflects the human situation on the other. The first part, faithfully reflecting God who has revealed Himself in Jesus, will introduce us to all the things we have received through our Christian tradition itself, and through the early Christian church. On the other hand, the human situation must also be reflected faithfully in the kind of spirituality within, because God on the one side and the human on the other are inseparable in our search for spirituality. Spirituality is a constant wrestle with what constitutes God and what constitutes the human.

For us in the Pacific, to explore spirituality is, on the one hand, to explore who God is in the Pacific and, on the other, the kind of environment we have, the seas and the mountains and the rivers, the myths that we have, the stories, the kind

of life that our people in the villages live. It is to explore the things that we hear, the things that we laugh at, the things that move us deeply, our fears, our hopes, our groanings. This is what I mean by the human situation. So our spirituality is how we order our lives, our community, our college, how we pass that on to the kind of curriculum that we have in the colleges so that it totally reflects both God and the human situation.

I believe that there is no one uniform concept or experience of spirituality in the Bible, and there is no one uniform concept of spirituality in our lives. The different cultural and religious backgrounds, different social, economic, political situations and psychological conditions that we come from determine and influence the kind of spirituality that we have or live. So that the kind of spirituality that I have may be vastly different from the one they experience in Kanaky, and that also is true of other parts of the Pacific. The kind of spirituality that men have is quite different from the kind that women have. The context determines the shape of our spirituality.

Generally speaking, all people have some source of spirituality and often it arises out of how we order our lives, following St Augustine, or according to what we like most in life. That affects the way we use our time and our energy, or how we relate to others, or how we relate to the environment around us. This spirituality that results from our worldview pervades our whole life and involves our whole person. It may be bland, it may be selfish, it may be destructive or just downright demonic.

This search for a meaningful and relevant spirituality is a worldwide movement. If you look at the charismatics and in Asia you see plenty of this. The world is a different world today, there are so many changes and so many things happening, and there is a search for a spirituality that would empower people in their struggle for meaning, for peace and justice. And this search is found not only within Christianity but in other religions. It cuts across cultural, racial and religious lines. The risks and changes and potential dangers to the world environment all make a search for an empowering spirituality all the more vital and urgent. I was involved in the Programme on Theological Education of the World Council of Churches for about five years, and almost all of this involvement in one way or another was involved with spirituality.

The Marks of Christian Spirituality

I want to pick up with you some of the things that are in what is known as the

Iona document - *Spiritual Formation in Theological Education*. It is a very useful document for some of the questions that we have raised here: What is spirituality? What are the marks of Christian spirituality? You will find that this kind of questioning is encouraged right across the member churches of the World Council of Churches. It was at the heart of the meeting that was held in Iona (Scotland) in 1987, in which Protestants and Roman Catholics participated. As a guide tracing lines to help one identify marks of Christian spirituality the document coming out of that meeting is a useful one.

Let me then just pick up a few points from this document and share them with you now. The first is that the spirituality that we seek in the churches today is one which is reconciling and integrating. It seeks to reconcile man to man, man to woman, persons to God and persons to nature. There is a lot of work to be done precisely in that area. We live in a very badly divided world, divided across many lines. Spirituality seeks to reconcile the seekers. It seeks the integration of the whole person in mind and body and soul, a life that is whole and not compartmentalised. It seeks a wholeness of community, transcending the social, economic, political and cultural boundaries.

Secondly, the incarnation in human activity is expressed in daily life. It is sensed in peoples, languages, through the specific symbols of a people. It is also rooted in scripture and nourished by prayer, and is immersed in the word of God.

Thirdly, this spirituality is interpreted in the midst of our historical realities. That is important. Any exegesis of the scriptures abstracted from the historical realities of the day is false exegesis and therefore false spirituality. What we need is spirituality of engagement, not escape, but one that is formed by the habit of prayer and reflection.

Fourthly, spirituality is costly, self-giving, and not cheap, not 'cheap grace,' as Bonhoeffer says. And I must admit there are all sorts of cheap spiritualities all around. We must search for the true spirituality based on a God who has revealed himself in Jesus and reflects the historical events of our times.

Fifthly, spirituality must be rooted in the community, and centred around the eucharist. It is community-oriented, not individualistic. There are so many spiritualities that are individualistic, that is, an escape from the community. But a spirituality that looks in that direction is not the mark of a Christian spirituality. Our spirituality is not all in our minds and in our thoughts, it has

to bear fruit, it has to come out, to be expressed outwardly in our service and witness. There is no spirituality without commitment.

Sixthly, ours is the kind of spirituality that is waiting for God's surprising ignition instead of forcing God into human planning. It is marked by our readiness to enter into silence, silence where we are ready for God's surprises. And that is not easy, it is very difficult, and it is threatening, very threatening to be ready to be surprised. Are we ready to be surprised? To be ready to be surprised by God is a mark of Christian spirituality.

And lastly, our spirituality is open to the wider world, to the whole inhabited world. It is open, not only within the spectrum of the church, not only open to Christianity, it is open to other religions - to Hinduism, to Buddhism, open to the wider *oikumene* so that we are looking for a wholistic world, a world that is not compartmentalised, but a world that is one. There is only one history, there is no sacred and no secular, there is only one history, and that one history is where spirituality has to be lived.

These are the few points from the Iona document. But let us look at one or two additional points. The Christian churches' search for spirituality in our time must ultimately be related to our full unity in Jesus Christ. I hope that will be strongly focused this week, because the kind of spirituality that we are now talking about is the kind of spirituality from which our own cultures find truth, but it must not lead us on to escape from that need to unite with others in Jesus Christ. We must strive for full unity in Jesus Christ, as a Pacific people, as the churches in the Pacific, as something we do to strengthen the unity of the churches here. I hope that as we work together this week, and as we move into the different directions in this search for spirituality, that we will keep in focus the fact that all we do is an indication of our willingness to be one in Christ. This is what the Vatican II decree on ecumenism has to say:

Change of heart and holiness of life, together with public and private prayer for the unity of Christians, should be regarded as the soul of the whole ecumenical movement.

Powerful words. I hope we will remember these words as we journey.

That is the first part of what I want to say, and now I move into the second part, which has to do with the cultural resources for spirituality.

Christ the Transformer of Culture

There is a strong feeling in the churches today, especially in Third World churches, that there is a very real place for culture in the understanding of the Gospel, including spirituality, because the Gospel can never go unclothed by the culture in which it has been propagated. There is no such thing, there has never been nor will there ever be a Gospel that is not clothed in a culturally conditioned garment. And we must be honest to admit that what we are saying is culturally conditioned, is very much coloured and shaped by our own cultures and by the way we were brought up, our psychological conditions, our political situations. We must be honest this week to face that, and perhaps in our facing that we might be led to enrich one another, might be led to correct each other, might be led to come together strongly.

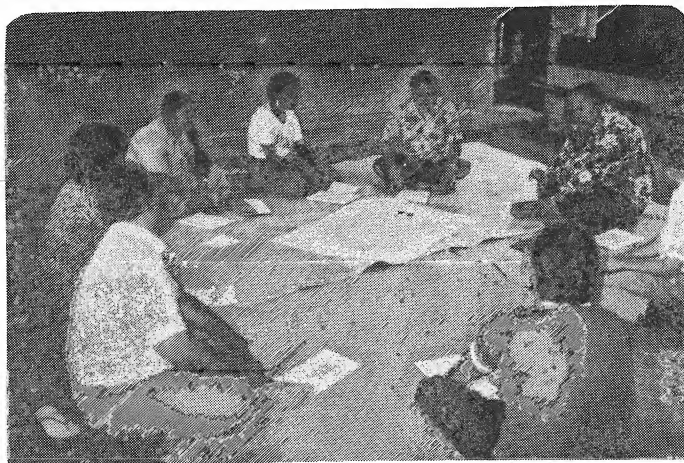
According to the Report of the Sixth Assembly of the World Council of Churches, culture is what holds the community together, giving a common framework to meaning. It is preserved in language, thought patterns, ways of life, attitudes, symbols and presuppositions, and is celebrated in art, music, drama, literature and the like. It constitutes the collective memory of the people, and the collective heritage which will be handed down to generations still to come. Culture provides for our spiritual pilgrimage to take place in a context, the context in which we have to wrestle and find what spirituality for our day means.

I come down to one suggestion as a way forward in our discussion on spirituality in the Pacific. This is really a very preliminary suggestion. Some of you will know the book written by H. Richard Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture*. I think it is not bad for us to look at that in relation to our search for spirituality. Niebuhr speaks of Christ *against* culture, Christ *of* culture, Christ *above* culture, Christ *and* culture in paradox, Christ the *transformer* of culture. Now I want to talk about the last one, Christ the transformer of culture.

This view rests on a positive doctrine of creation and the incarnation. This is the first part of what I want to say, that a positive doctrine of creation is very important when we come to Pacific cultures. It means that we have to recapture the meanings that we have, and have come to. It means getting into the stories of people in the islands and the villages, listening to the music and the songs that old men and women are still singing in the villages. It means taking our seas very seriously. (Now they have become troubled seas in the Pacific.) It means taking our mountains seriously, our rivers, taking the entire environment

seriously. That is creation, and that typology, Christ the transformer of culture, is a positive one because it belongs to the expressions of theology in the Pacific. A lot of these expressions are buried and not taken seriously, not listened to. This is the time when we must dig them up again, and recapture them and dream them again.

This typology, Christ the transformer of culture, also assumes a positive doctrine of incarnation, but in so doing it admits the radical corruption of humanity. Corruption here means the perversion of the good, not as something that is said to be intrinsic to humans, but the perversion of the good. That is what I mean by corruption, because as I go through my own meaning in Fiji, in our stories, I also find plenty of demons, and conversion and rebirth are needed. This typology of transformation of culture, then, is much more radical than the other types that Richard Niebuhr discussed in *Christ and Culture*. Transformation comes through the dying and the rising of the incarnate Lord. It is a transformation of human life and culture. So what does that mean for spirituality? It means that the spirituality that will come out will be one that is characterised by passive listening as well as active prophetic preaching or proclamation, the passive and the active come together.



Participants listen to Oka Fauolo, Principal of Malua Theological College, during a group session at the 1990 Spiritual Formation Consultation.

Listening as a Resource for Spirituality

I shared with some of my teachers in Melbourne some of the cultural rituals that we have in Fiji, like the fire-walking, and I asked myself, 'How do we explain all these things?' And some of the rituals that you have in your own islands, how do we explain them? Well, I think that with some of these things we just have to leave them alone, just have to sit there and listen, just to enter into them passively, and not explain them away in language that will rob them of their need. We have to keep some of these things as mystical, as mysterious, and the transforming side will come out as a natural result of the prophetic dimension of our faith. As we go into this we will discover where culture is oppressing us and destroying human life, and where it is building up human life. And ours will be a spirituality that is both mystical and prophetic.

I finish by saying today that I am now in Melbourne, and there is a lot of talk going on in Melbourne about the environment. And I am wondering whether it is we who are true, or whether people in Melbourne are true, because when I come to Fiji there is no awareness about how things are going to affect our seas and environment over the next ten years. What about the 'greenhouse effect', in which the sea will rise and islands like Kiribati, and other atolls, will be no more in 50 years' time? This is the talk in Melbourne and it has been going on for some time. And it is not just mere talk. There has been research and scientists have appeared on television and in the media talking about all these kinds of things that will affect us, especially our small islands, as we are surrounded by seas in the next 50 years.

So how do we live our spirituality in an age that will be like that in 50 years' time? How do we live as Christians in that environment? I would like to say that the kind of spirituality we have in the Pacific now will be false spirituality if it is divorced from the realities of the environment in which we live, as well as from the other realities, the historical, political realities. What other resources can we hold on to that will empower us to live courageously and to live meaningfully in the Pacific in the coming millenium?

REFLEXIONS THEOLOGIQUES SUR LA "CONTEXTUALISATION" DE LA FORMATION SPIRITUELLE

Sevati Tuwere

Il y a deux choses que je voudrais faire. D'abord je voudrais partager avec vous quelques aperçus théologiques, ensuite je voudrais explorer quelques ressources culturelles de spiritualité et peut-être suggérer un modèle pour l'utilisation de ces ressources.

Maintenant, je dois reconnaître que je viens avec des suppositions. Je suppose que vous savez déjà ce qu'est la spiritualité, parce que ce sujet a été examiné l'année dernière et il doit avoir une signification pour plusieurs d'entre nous.



Sevati Tuwere

Une définition expérimentale de la spiritualité

En même temps, j'approche le sujet avec quelque appréhension parce que j'ai conscience que le sujet de spiritualité n'est ni une doctrine, ni une théologie. Il est la vie même, la façon dont nous ressentons et agissons dans notre vie de tous les jours. Et cela m'ammène, si vous le voulez bien, à une définition plus élaborée de la spiritualité. C'est la manière dont nous organisons notre existence, ou notre communauté, ou notre collège pour être un vrai reflet de Dieu, qui d'une part s'est révélé Lui-même en Jésus, et d'autre part révèle la vraie nature humaine. La première partie, refléter fidèlement Dieu qui s'est révélé Lui-même en Jésus, nous conduira à tout ce que nous avons reçu de la tradition chrétienne et de l'église chrétienne primitive. D'autre part, le côté humain doit aussi être fidèlement reflété dans notre spiritualité intérieure parce que Dieu et la nature humaine sont inséparables dans notre recherche de la spiritualité. La spiritualité est une lutte continuelle entre les choses divines d'une part et humaines de l'autre.

Pour nous, dans le Pacifique, explorer la spiritualité est d'une part voir qui est Dieu dans le Pacifique et, d'autre part, voir quel environnement nous avons, les

mers et les montagnes, les rivières, nos mythes, nos contes, le genre de vie que nos peuples mènent dans les villages. C'est explorer les choses que nous entendons, les choses qui nous font rire, les choses qui nous émeuvent profondément, nos craintes, nos espoirs, nos plaintes. Par tout cela j'entends la condition humaine. Ainsi notre spiritualité est la manière dont nous arrangeons notre vie, notre communauté, notre collège, la manière dont nous établissons un programme scolaire pour qu'il reflète à la fois le divin et l'humain.

Je crois qu'il n'y a pas un concept uniforme ni une seule expérience de spiritualité dans la bible, ni un concept uniforme de spiritualité dans nos vies. Nos différentes expériences culturelles et religieuses, nos différentes situations sociales, économiques politiques et nos conditions psychologiques déterminent et influencent notre pensée et notre vie spirituelles. Ainsi ma spiritualité peut être très différente de celle des gens de Kanaky, ou des autres pays du Pacifique. La spiritualité des hommes n'est pas la même que celle des femmes. Le contexte détermine la forme de notre spiritualité.

De manière générale, chacun a une source de spiritualité. Souvent c'est la façon dont nous organisons notre vie, selon St Augustin, ou nos préférences dans la vie. Cela joue sur la façon dont nous employons notre temps et notre énergie, comment nous nous comportons envers les autres et envers notre environnement. Cette spiritualité qui découle de notre vision du monde imprègne notre vie et engage notre personne toute entière. Elle peut être affable, elle peut être égoïste, elle peut être destructive ou franchement démoniaque.

Cette spiritualité, cette recherche d'une spiritualité positive et pertinente est un mouvement généralisé. Pour s'en convaincre il suffit de regarder les mouvements charismatiques et aussi l'Asie. Le monde est différent aujourd'hui, avec tant de changements et d'événements et puis, il y a la recherche d'une spiritualité stimulant les gens dans leur lutte pour donner un sens à leur vie, pour la paix et pour la justice. On trouve cette recherche non pas seulement dans le christianisme mais aussi dans d'autres religions. Elle franchit les barrières culturelles, raciales et religieuses. Les risques, les changements et les dangers latents pour l'environnement rendent la recherche d'une spiritualité stimulante d'autant plus vitale et urgente. J'ai travaillé dans le programme d'enseignement théologique du Conseil Oecuménique des Eglises pendant près de cinq ans et toute mon activité se rapportait, d'une manière ou d'une autre, à la spiritualité.

Les marques de la spiritualité chrétienne

Je voudrais revoir avec vous certains passages du document de Iona - *Spiritual Formation in Theological Education* (Formation spirituelle dans l'enseignement théologique). C'est un document très utile en ce qui concerne les questions que nous venons de soulever: Qu'est-ce que la spiritualité? Qu'est-ce qui caractérise la spiritualité chrétienne? Une telle remise en question est très encouragée parmi les églises membres du Conseil Oecuménique des Eglises. Elle était au centre d'une conférence qui eut lieu à Iona (en Ecosse) en 1987 et à laquelle protestants et catholiques participaient. Le document issu de cette conférence est très utile dans la mesure où il aide à identifier les caractéristiques de la spiritualité chrétienne.

Je ne releverai que quelques points de ce document pour les partager avec vous. Premier point: la spiritualité que nous cherchons dans les églises aujourd'hui est une spiritualité réconciliante et intégrante. Elle cherche à réconcilier l'homme avec l'homme, l'homme avec la femme, les deux avec Dieu et l'humanité avec la nature. Il reste beaucoup à faire dans ce domaine précisément. Nous vivons dans un monde qui est fait de divisions. La spiritualité cherche à réconcilier ceux qui cherchent. Elle vise l'intégration de la personne entière: esprit, corps et âme; une vie non compartimentée qui forme un tout. Elle vise



Les participants venant de 14 collèges théologiques lors de la conférence sur la formation spirituelle en 1989.

l'intégrité de la communauté dépassant les frontières sociales, économiques, politiques et culturelles.

Deuxième point: l'incarnation dans l'activité humaine s'exprime dans la vie de tous les jours. Elle se manifeste chez les peuples, dans les langues et dans leurs symboles spécifiques. Elle est aussi enracinée dans la Bible et nourrie par la prière et immergée dans la parole de Dieu.

Troisième point: Cette spiritualité est interprétée au milieu de nos réalités historiques. C'est très important. Toute exégèse de la Bible soustraite des réalités historiques du jour est une fausse exégèse et donc une fausse spiritualité. Nous avons besoin non pas d'une spiritualité d'évasion mais d'une spiritualité d'engagement qui soit formée par l'habitude de la prière et de la réflexion.

Quatrième point: la spiritualité est coûteuse, généreuse, elle n'est pas bon marché, ce n'est point une 'grâce bon marché' comme disait Bonhoeffer. Et je dois admettre qu'il y a déjà toutes sortes de spiritualités bon marché autour de nous. Nous devons chercher la vraie spiritualité fondée sur un Dieu qui s'est révélé en Jésus et reflète les événements historiques de notre temps.

Cinquième point: la spiritualité doit être enracinée dans la communauté et centrée sur l'eucharistie. Elle doit être tournée vers la société au lieu d'être individualiste. Il y a tant de spiritualités individualistes, c'est-à-dire qui cherchent une évasion de la communauté. Or, une spiritualité de ce genre n'est pas une spiritualité chrétienne. Notre spiritualité n'est pas seulement dans l'esprit et la pensée, elle doit porter fruit, elle doit sortir, s'exprimer à l'extérieur par le service et le témoignage. Il n'y a pas de spiritualité sans engagement.

Sixième point: notre spiritualité est celle qui attend l'illumination inattendue de Dieu au lieu de forcer Dieu dans nos plans humains. Elle est caractérisée par notre disposition au silence, ce silence qui nous prépare aux surprises divines. Et ce n'est pas facile, c'est même très difficile et cela fait peur, très peur, d'attendre la surprise de Dieu. Sommes-nous prêts à être pris au dépourvu? Être prêt à être surpris par Dieu est la marque de la spiritualité chrétienne.

Dernier point: notre spiritualité est ouverte au monde, au monde habité tout entier. Elle est ouverte non seulement aux églises chrétiennes mais aux autres religions - hindouisme, bouddhisme; elle est ouverte à l'Oekoumène tout entier. Nous cherchons un monde qui soit intègre, non pas un monde compartimenté,

mais un monde qui soit un. Il n'y a qu'une histoire et il n'y a ni sacré ni profane; il n'y a qu'une histoire, et c'est là que la spiritualité doit être vécue.

Voilà les quelques points du document de Iona. Considérons maintenant un ou deux détails supplémentaires. La recherche de la spiritualité des églises chrétiennes de notre temps doit à la fin se rapporter à l'unité parfaite en Jésus-Christ. J'espère que nous nous concentrerons là dessus cette semaine, parce que la spiritualité dont nous parlons est celle dans laquelle nos cultures trouvent de la vérité, mais cela ne doit pas nous conduire à oublier la nécessité de s'unir aux autres en Jésus-Christ. Nous devons aspirer à une union complète en Jésus-Christ, en tant que peuples du Pacifique et en tant qu'églises du Pacifique, comme quelque chose que nous faisons pour renforcer l'unité de nos églises. J'espère que, pendant que nous travaillons ensemble cette semaine, et pendant que nous allons dans différentes directions à la recherche de la spiritualité, nous ne devons jamais oublier que tout ce que nous faisons est le signe de notre volonté d'être un en Christ. Voici ce que dit le décret de Vatican II sur l'œcuménisme:



De gauche à droite: Lisa Meo, Fidji, Anna Blessing-Boe, Iles Salamon, et Luisa Amituana'i, Samoa occidentales, pendant une séance organisée par les Weavers (les tresseuses), la section "femmes et enseignement théologique" de l'association des écoles théologiques dans le Pacifique Sud (SPATS).

Conversion de coeur et sainteté de vie ainsi que prière publique et privée pour l'unité des chrétiens, doivent être regardées comme l'âme de tout le mouvement oecuménique.

Des paroles pleines de force! J'espère que nous nous en souviendrons durant notre voyage.

J'arrive ici à la fin de la première partie de mon exposé et je passe maintenant à la deuxième qui concerne les ressources culturelles pour la spiritualité.

Le Christ - transformateur de la culture

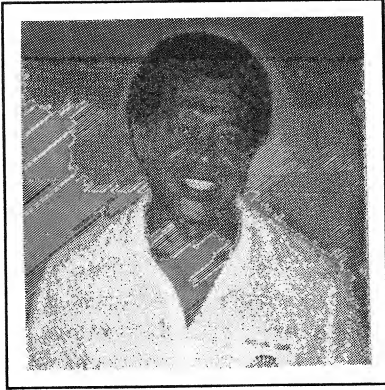
Dans les églises aujourd'hui, et particulièrement dans les églises du tiers monde, on a la conviction que la culture a une vraie place dans la compréhension de l'évangile, ce qui inclut la spiritualité, parce que l'évangile ne peut être séparé de la culture dans laquelle il a été propagé. Il n'y a jamais eu et il n'y aura jamais un évangile qui ne porte pas le vêtement de la culture. Soyons honnêtes et reconnaissons que tout ce que nous disons est conditionné, coloré et façonné par notre culture et notre éducation, par notre psychologie et notre politique. Nous devons être honnêtes et reconnaître cela et ainsi peut-être aurons nous l'occasion, cette semaine, de nous enrichir mutuellement, de nous corriger réciproquement et de renforcer nos liens.

Selon le compte rendu de la sixième assemblée du Conseil Oecuménique des Eglises, la culture est ce qui tient la communauté ensemble, elle forme le cadre commun pour la compréhension. La culture se manifeste dans la langue, la façon de penser, la manière de vivre, les attitudes, les symboles et les présomptions et elle s'exprime dans l'art, la musique, le théâtre, la littérature etc. Elle forme la mémoire collective des peuples et l'héritage collectif qui est transmis aux générations futures. La culture fournit un contexte à notre pèlerinage spirituel, contexte au milieu duquel nous devons lutter et trouver ce qu'est la spiritualité aujourd'hui.

A ce point, je voudrais faire une suggestion qui fera avancer notre discussion sur la spiritualité dans le Pacifique. C'est vraiment une suggestion primordiale. Certains d'entre vous connaissent peut-être le livre de H. Richard Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture* (Le Christ et la culture). Je pense qu'il serait bien de le regarder dans notre recherche de la spiritualité. Dans ce livre Niebuhr évoque le Christ *contre* la culture, le Christ *de* la culture, le Christ *au-dessus* de la culture, le Christ *et* la culture et le Christ *transformateur* de la culture. Maintenant

PSYCHOLOGICAL DIMENSIONS OF SPIRITUAL FORMATION

Makario Waqanivalu



Makario Wanqanivalu

Today let us look at God's call to humans - the vocation to do the mission work of God - and the human response to that call. We will briefly look at some of the motivations which are involved in accepting the call to religious vocation. In so doing we will look at the complex reality of one person (for example, a minister) trying to live fully the values of the Gospel.

We will see that there are resistances deep within the person to responding fully to God's call. Take, for example,

Jonah. He was called by God and he was turned, pulled the other way of his own will, because of his own needs. This resistance belongs to the whole person and that is where psychology can help us, because psychology deals with the whole human person, spiritually, intellectually, socially, even anthropologically.

We will also look briefly at the Parable of the Sower, as an indication of the blocks within the human person to responding fully and totally to the values of the Gospel. We will touch on some ways of undoing these blocks in the person and helping the person to grow into living the Gospel fully and responding in freedom to God's intention, God's call.

God's Call and Our Response

Let us begin then with God's call. As we all know, God calls people to fellowship with Him, to collaborate with Him in the work of spreading the Kingdom of God. Why God calls such a person is freely and entirely up to God. It is His choice. In other words, He is free to call anybody He wants. And God's call is a call also to freedom for the person, the freedom to respond, the freedom to love God and to love other people.

In fact this freedom depends on the human person. The ideal is that we will all say yes and do what God wants us to do, which is to be co-workers in His Kingdom. This is the ideal, to live fully the Gospel values. But one responding to God's call will respond only on the basis of what one has, one's human nature. It is this human person who is going to try with all his or her might and energy to live and respond to the call. You and I know that the human person has weaknesses, has limitations, cannot do everything.

It is here that psychology comes in, because even when the human person wants to fully respond to God's call, due to weaknesses within the human nature he or she cannot fully respond. An example is Jonah. In this story we see the conflict of two wills, the will of God and the will of the human person. Jonah wanted to respond, but his will (doing what he thought was best) was dominant and therefore it was a block to the initial response to God's call. What happened was that what he was as a human person - his fear, his own insecurity - drew him away from the 'yes' to fulfil God's call. Later he did respond, of course. I am only talking about the initial stages. Here we see that deep within this person, this prophet, is the same weakness of human nature that you or I and the people we serve also have.

In other words, there are blocks that prevent us from responding fully and freely to God, giving ourselves totally to God. Why? Because we are drawn inward, drawn back to ourselves, to satisfy our own will, to satisfy the needs of our insecurity. Perhaps it is fear that prevents us from responding fully to God. All this is very common to anyone who strives to respond to God's call.

In my experiences in counselling in Rome, I met many people who come - priests or those who want to be priests, those who want to be religious, families, married people - who sit down and say, 'We have been trying to live our vocation, to respond fully the best we can, but we are frustrated because all our efforts seem to be wasted. It is not that we don't pray - we pray. It is not that we are not sure of the Gospel values that we are living, but we seem to be doing almost the opposite of what we should do.' In honesty and good faith these persons desire to live a spiritual life that is faithful to the Gospel. But when they look at their lives, deep within their hearts, there are conflicts. They are torn between earthly values - self-centred values - and religious values, and most of the time they do not understand why, and most of the time they do not even see what is happening. Therefore they come to someone who can help them.

Freedom and Awareness

What we try to do most of the time is to help the person to become aware, that is, to become conscious of the internal conflicts within him or her, to become aware of the relationship between the self and the Gospel values. Really, the aim and the role of the counsellor, the therapist, the psychologist, is to try to free this person from these blocks. We want to free the person so that he or she can come closer to living out the Gospel that he or she professes.

The freedom that I am talking about and the desire that people must have is an internal freedom. Unless we are inwardly free then we cannot respond fully to God's call. It does not matter that we all know the Gospel values, the teaching of Christ to love God and to love neighbour. For how many times do we love ourselves more than we love our neighbour? How many times do we think about our own security first, or depend on our own efforts or our own energies, on our own selves rather than God, rather than the Spirit? This is what happens to all of us. We can pray and we can say we tried to live the Gospel, but that does not take away the conflicts within us. That does not take away the blocks that stop us in our efforts to become fully united with God.

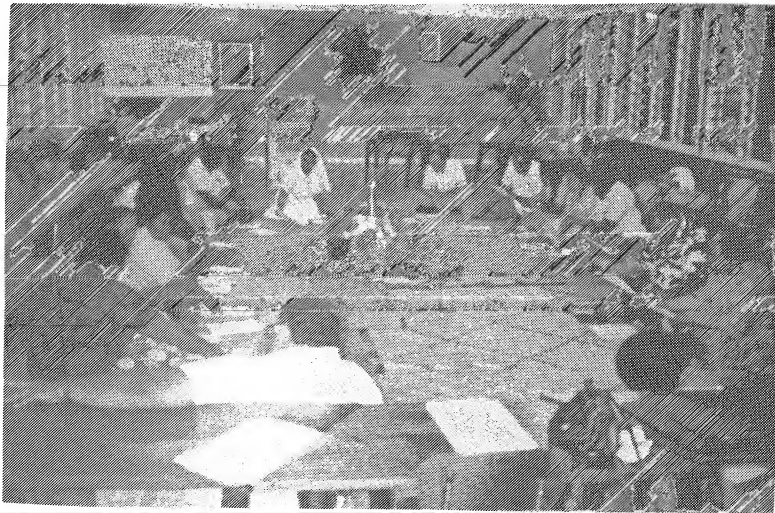
Paul said, it is not I that live but Christ that lives in me. But most of the time we humans believe it is I that lives, not Christ that lives within me. Paul also said there are many times that he wants to do the good that he knows he must do, but he knows that he does the opposite. And this conflict is where the religious psychologists try to base their approach of the integration of spirituality with psychology. This may seem to be bringing in a new science perhaps, but really it is not new, it is as old as the human species on this earth. Because psychology deals with spirituality, as it deals with the social aspects of the human person. So we cannot just go with our spirituality and forget the realities of being human.

Motivations for Ministry

In my work, then, I am involved in assessments of people wanting to join the priesthood or religious life, and one of the reasons is to assess the kind of motivation that people have in joining the priesthood, for example. Because one's desire to respond to God's call can be covered and parcelled over with very human motivations. These have nothing at all to do with God's calling, with the institution of the priesthood, or even with responding to Christ's teaching. Let me give you an example that perhaps we can apply here.

In Fiji, and in most of the Pacific Islands, to work as a minister of God has a high value, prestige, honour, and respect from people. To be a minister can be to be very powerful. And of course almost anyone can apply for the ministry or the priesthood - people from the university, people who are already working and people who don't have sufficient education. Now one who perhaps left Form Four can be very attracted to the priesthood or to religious life or to be a minister, not so much because it gives the person the chance to serve in God's vineyard but because such a person is given a good chance for free education. These persons can study philosophy, theology, and they are well looked after. Also, if I become a minister I will have power, I will be impressive, people can look up to me and I can be influential. The conclusion is that I can have a satisfactory life. If I am not happy in my work I can always resign, but when I resign I will have all the benefits that I have acquired.

Now that can happen, and it is all bound up together with the human motivation of self-achievement. Therefore, as we work with theological institutions, one of the goals of psychology assessment and counselling is to try and free the person from this self-centred motivation that can cloud his or her desire to work for the Kingdom. Because one is not going there to serve me, myself and I, but to serve God. And so my self-image, what I can achieve, is secondary. It is the consequence of serving God, yes, but not the prime motivation.



Participants during community prayer.

This is an important aspect of psychology that needs to be integrated into spiritual formation, because when the student engages in ministry then the motivation must be right. There must be the motivation to serve God and live for God, to free one's self to be able to love God totally and to love the other person. If not, spiritual frustrations will come both during formation and after formation. If the motivation for personal enhancement is not satisfied then the person will be deeply frustrated, and his or her ministry will be adversely affected. Or, on the other hand, he or she may live up to personal wishes and desires, but surrounded and covered deceitfully by the cloak of the priest or minister. There is a conflict between 'I live, not I but Christ,' and 'I live, not Christ in me.'

What I am just briefly trying to state here is that the conflicts within the human person have to be addressed honestly if the person is to be free to live fully for his or her vocation. Most of these conflicts are unknown even to the person; they exist in what is known as the unconscious state within the human self. Bringing them to the person's conscious awareness is important work because unless the person is aware of these unconscious conflicts and unconscious motivations he or she cannot tackle them.

From the Unconscious Will to Conscious Awareness

Let us go back to the question of human freedom. God respects our freedom. But if that freedom is hindered through unconscious forces which pull the person in the wrong direction, then we remain unaware of it. And only through the help of somebody, a counsellor, a companion, a spiritual director, can the person be brought to awareness. If one attempts to go ahead with a life of ministry, a religious vocation, then the resistance comes. The person is resisting integrating the Gospel values into his or her life. That can be helped on the psychological level. But as you may be aware, psychology on its own is of no use. However, psychology always working together with spirituality, with the whole human person, is very essential in the kind of formation that we seek.

The resistance that often occurs is related to self-fulfillment. None of us wants to give up what we like most. We can make all sorts of excuses to avoid this. In many of the case studies that we have done we find people resisting, not really knowing why. The value of wanting to preach the Gospel and to help others can be very much resisted through the counter-value of serving in order to be served. This is related to the value of self-achievement: that I can look

at myself and evaluate how good I am by what I do. And the more sermons I preach which touch and influence the people, the happier I am. The more persons I have in my parish, in my congregation, the more famous I can become.

These are all just human motivations, but as you can see they come into conflict with what we are all about as spiritual leaders, and unless that is checked then the kind of spirituality we will be living will be based on these human motivations. They will cause resistance to the Gospel values which we will have to contend with all the rest of our lives.

A Case Study in Resistance

I remember while I was in Italy, coming in contact with a young Italian who wanted to become a priest. He went to church, he came from a church-going family, and he wanted to join a religious congregation that goes out in mission, but on the condition that he would be posted close to his home, just a one-hour drive from his home town. He had the desire to respond fully to God's call, but he could respond only with his own conditions, when he wanted to, when he was ready. This person was supposed to go to Ireland for a spiritual year, to learn English, but he did not want to go. He said: 'Because I am Italian I can pray better in Italian and I can understand God more in Italian.' So when people spoke in English he told them that they must understand him and try to talk slowly. In the end he had to leave and go back to his home.

This person's dependence, the need to depend on his family, the need for security (and he is only secure in his own culture, his own environment) is a clear example of the resistance to response to God's call, the resistance to live a religious life, the resistance to become a minister of God. It is not that God did not call this man, I personally feel that he had a vocation. He wanted to respond but only on his own conditions. This is the kind of resistance that I am talking about, the kind of conflict that happens within the human person. And for the person to be free and to be able to fully respond to God we have to understand the nature and source of such resistance.

It comes down to doing my will or the will of God. But because of our human nature, the weaknesses we have, the limitations, the tendency is to do my will first and God's will after. This is true in the Bible, even with the prophets and dominant figures in both the Old Testament and the New Testament. Take David, for example, King Solomon, and Jonah. And in the New Testament, remember Peter, and the Apostle Paul. All of these persons, when they were

called, because of their human natures felt more secure at times following their own wills. Always there will be this pull.

The other aspect of this wilfulness is the tendency to be influenced by what is called '*apparenthood*' - things that we convince ourselves are real which in fact are not real. We seek enjoyment, for example, in money, pleasure, material things, and we prefer all of this to living a life of sacrifice. So there comes again the conflict between 'happiness' and sacrifice (the cross of life). We tend to look for apparent 'happiness' more readily. Again we see the conflict of values, again the conflict of motivation, again the resistance to living fully for the Gospel, for the Kingdom of God.

Images from the Parable of the Sower

I would like just to draw your attention to the Parable of the Sower, as we read it in Mark 4:1-9. Let us look briefly at the different grounds where the sower sowed the seeds - the path, the rocky ground, the thorny bushes, and then the good and rich soil. The ground in psychological thinking is the heart, the soul, the ground is where the seed falls, the seed that has to grow and branch out. For the first ground, the footpath, the heart is strong. It is not that the call of God did not come, but because the heart is too hard the seeds cannot grow. It is strong from the human point of view. But what happens? The birds eat the seeds because the heart is too hard and not free to open itself up. This kind of person is not free to be open to live with the Gospel: he or she cannot make use of the Word of God, cannot live it, cannot integrate it into his or her own life.

The soil that has rocks appears to have good soil, there is ground for growth and development, but underneath the thin soil are the hard rocks. For the growth of the roots in the soil to take place we have to take away the rocks, pick up the rocks and prepare the ground, put in more soil so that the seed can grow. The rocks resemble the human motivations, the individual desires that can effectively block the Word of God from developing within our hearts. We have to take them out, so that the heart can cooperate and work with grace. Remember the rich young man who said to Christ, 'What can I do to enter the Kingdom of God?' Jesus said, 'Follow the commandments.' 'I have done all that.' 'One more thing: leave everything and follow me.' The man had to say to Christ, 'No, I can't.' This is the resistance of the rock.

And then there is the ground with the thorny bushes. It has good ground but the bushes choke the plant from growing. On the psychological level these thorny

undergrowths are the worries, the frustrations, the fears that form our resistances. These psychological thorns can affect a human person in the process of development and growth. It is not that that person does not have the ground, the ground is there. But authentic growth is choked. What can we do? We have to remove the thorny bushes, so that the plant, the spiritual seeking within the human person, can grow and bear fruit.

And perhaps the fourth ground, the good ground which bears much fruit, is, on the psychological level, one that has been helped through counselling to come face-to-face with and accept the weaknesses that one has. Such a person is more free to respond fully to God's call, is more free to work with the Spirit, to collaborate. And therefore the plant that grows within this heart bears much fruit.

In human development (which includes religious and spiritual development) these are the stages that we have to go through. No one is automatically the good ground, no. Otherwise there is no need for formation. Since it is a gradual process, then within these various stages there is the need for honest, open encounter - encounter between those who are formed and those who are forming them. This is a human encounter, but it is a dialogue to help the person ultimately enter into deeper dialogue with God.



FURTHER READING ON PSYCHOLOGY

Kiely, B., s.j. **Psychology and Moral Theology : Lines of Convergence.** Rome : Gregorian University Press, 1980, 302 pp.

Ridick, Joyce. **Treasures in Earthen Vessels : The Vows, A Wholistic Approach.** Homebush, NSW, Australia : St Paul Publications, 1984, 165 pp.

Rulla, Luigi M., s.j. **Anthropology of the Christian Vocation, Vol. 1. Inter-disciplinary Bases.** Rome : Gregorian University Press, 1986, 541 pp.

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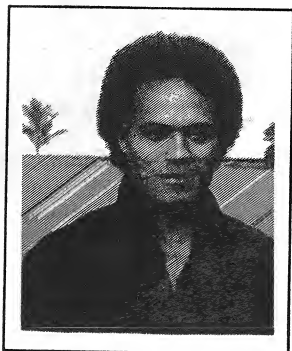
COME, HOLY SPIRIT - RENEW THE WHOLE CREATION

World Council of Churches 1991 Assembly

The World Council of Churches Assembly held in Canberra in February, 1991 was as close to the Pacific as it is ever likely to be. It thus sparked intense interest on the part of both the Pacific islanders who were in attendance and the Pacific churches in general.

In this issue we have reflected upon the Assembly in three ways. First Talia Tapaleao shares his perceptions and impressions as an Assembly steward. He responds with candor, perceptivity and depth to several questions put to him by the Editor about the character and impact of the Assembly. Then Leslie Boseto shares his theological reflections about the ecumenical mission of the church in the light of concerns highlighted in Canberra. We have also included four excerpts from a major - and highly controversial - address delivered at the Assembly by Chung Hyun-Kyung, a South Korean theologian. Her rejection of a patriarchal God and patriarchal Christianity, coupled with a feminist vision of the Holy Spirit, made a lasting impression on those who heard her.

REFLECTIONS ON THE CANBERRA ASSEMBLY



Talia Tapaleao

Talia Tapaleao

What seemed to you to be the general 'mood' of the WCC Assembly in Canberra? What concerns received the greatest attention?

There was a great sense of urgency in the Assembly to join together to work for unity and reconciliation in the world. Toward this end the Assembly was reminded of many ugly divisions and disunities around the world. A paramount issue - because we were in the midst of it - was

the Gulf war. The general sense of the Assembly was that the war was neither a holy war nor a just one. Many other issues of disunity were highlighted, such as: conflicts in the Middle East (apart from the war); the issue of racism, especially in South Africa; the global tragedy of poverty; the issue of discrimination against women; and the issue of youth. (The youth claimed, for example, that the bulk of those exposed to wars and armed conflicts are young people.)

Other important issues addressed by the Assembly included ongoing examples of economic injustice, the alienation of indigenous peoples from their lands, and the increasing militarisation of societies, which leads to the escalation of human rights abuses, massive displacements of people, and a large increase in the numbers of refugees and asylum-seekers. The problem of militarisation was also related to the international arms market, which contributes to provocations and manipulations by external powers, and results in internal repression, especially of the poor and marginalised.

Environmental issues received serious attention by the Assembly, including the problem of nuclear testing and the threat of global warming. National and regional conflicts which were highlighted included the emerging democracies in the Baltic States and elsewhere in Eastern Europe, the civil war in El Salvador, and the multi-faceted conflicts in Sri Lanka and India.

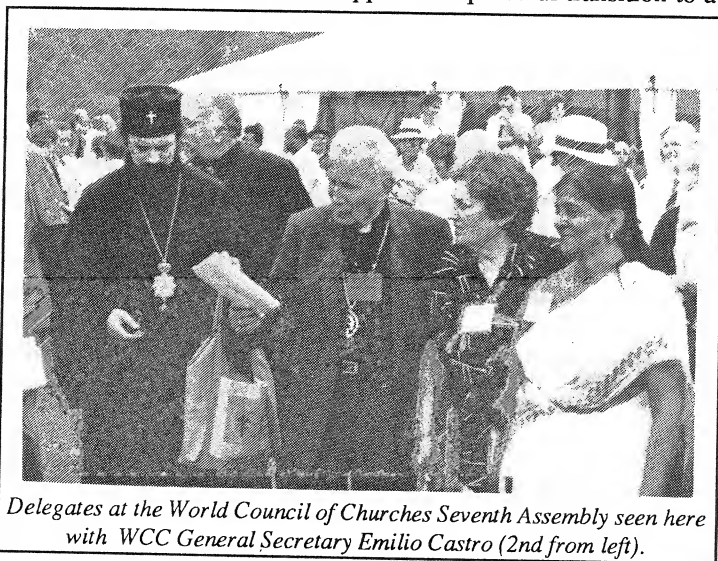
With these kinds of issues, characterised by acute hatred and disunity, dominating the Assembly, I can perhaps sum up the Assembly's general mood by saying that there was a strong sense of commitment to work for unity. In this respect, the Assembly also acknowledged the failure of the church itself to unite, especially when it dealt with the question of leadership and offices. Mention was also made of the old separation between Protestants and Roman Catholics, and the Assembly prayed that the two might soon come together.

What were the most important areas in which the Assembly was able to arrive at a strong consensus?

The most important examples of consensus, or the ability to take a strong and unequivocal stand, included:

1. Outright condemnation of the Gulf war and a call for the just and humane resolution of all conflicts in the Middle East.

2. Deep concern over the many internal conflicts intensified by external forces. The Assembly called on all churches and religious communities to come together to work for reconciliation in these conflicts. (Some of them are mentioned above.)
3. The Assembly felt that concern for indigenous peoples and their land rights must move beyond mere words. (This issue was of course dramatised by the presence of Australian Aboriginal peoples at the Assembly.) The Assembly urged the churches to influence governments and international bodies to support with vigour the goal of justice with sovereignty and self-determination for indigenous peoples. It also agreed to declare the year 1992, the quincentenary of the arrival of Columbus in the Western Hemisphere, a year against racism - with specific focus on indigenous and black peoples, who in this year will mark 500 years of genocide, land theft, slavery, and oppression. The Assembly called upon the international religious community to resist participating in activities celebrating 1992 designed without input from indigenous peoples. The Assembly also declared its opposition to continuing exploitation of indigenous peoples' land and mineral resources. It asked that the burial grounds and sacred sites of indigenous peoples be protected from desecration and destruction.
4. Concerning South Africa, the Assembly called upon all member churches to intensify their activities in support of a peaceful transition to a truly



democratic and non-racist South Africa.

5. For the Pacific, the Assembly recognised and reaffirmed the right of Pacific peoples to a nuclear-free Pacific. It also called on governments and transnational corporations to immediately cease all weapons testing, nuclear or conventional, and the dumping of nuclear and toxic wastes in the Pacific. The Assembly urged respect for the rights of the peoples of the Pacific to have principal authority for decision-making affecting the region. It reaffirmed its support for greater autonomy and independence for those Pacific Island peoples still under colonial domination. The Assembly further drew attention to the disastrous consequences of global warming, especially as it will affect Pacific island nations, and urged the international community, as a matter of priority, to adopt concerted counter-measures. It finally called upon the Pacific-rim countries to involve Pacific governments and peoples fully in all discussions of these and other matters affecting the region.

Do you feel that the concerns of the Pacific churches were adequately articulated and heard at the Assembly?

I feel that the concerns of the Pacific churches were well represented in the Assembly, and I personally sensed that the voice of the Pacific was made to be heard by the Assembly through the commitment and good participation of the Pacific delegation, thanks to the cooperation of the delegates and stewards. In large assemblies like this one, to make one's voice heard is often difficult or even impossible. Hence, for our small Pacific region to make an impact in this Assembly I think is quite an achievement. The Assembly reacted with respect for our concerns and promised support and participation in all efforts to address the concerns of Pacific peoples. Evidence of how well our concerns were articulated can be seen in the final draft of the Council's major priorities for action in the next seven years.

As a steward, what struck you most about the priorities of young people in today's world church? Was there a common ground, or did priorities differ widely from culture to culture?

In many ways these Christian young people from all over the world faced common concerns - for example, concerns about unemployment and other forms of injustice (even though they may be experienced differently in different contexts). But what struck me most was the unanimity of the youths' concern

about participation in church life. Many young people spoke strongly against the church's attitude of negligence toward the young and refusal to permit full participation of youth in the affairs of the church. The youth felt that a good example of this was shown in the youth participation in the Assembly, which was very small. As with the women, there was a strong desire among the youth to be heard and recognised as having commitments equal to those who are old and male.

What event, person or situation impressed you most deeply at the WCC Assembly?

What impressed me most in the Assembly was the presentation given by a woman. Chung Hyun-Kyung of South Korea gave a beautiful introduction to the Assembly theme, 'Come, Holy Spirit, Renew the Whole Creation.' It was so artistically crafted and so dramatic that I could replay it many times and still be impressed. Introduced with a Korean traditional dance, the whole theological reflection was integrated with the Korean setting. Korean imageries were well-chosen and effectively used, yet at the same time they communicated in a universal way that all of us, from whatever culture, could understand. So effective was her presentation that at the end she received a standing ovation from the huge throng of people from all over the world. She spoke eloquently about the feminist character of the Holy Spirit, that is, Her image as 'brooding over the mutilated creation,' bringing together bits and pieces for reconciliation. This is the hope I carry with me from the Assembly in Canberra.

BOOK NOTE

Fiji's Faiths - Who We Are and What We Believe. Interfaith Search (Fiji). Suva: Lotu Pasifika Productions, 1991, 93 pp. Price F\$4-50 (F\$3-50 for religious organisations purchasing 10 or more copies).

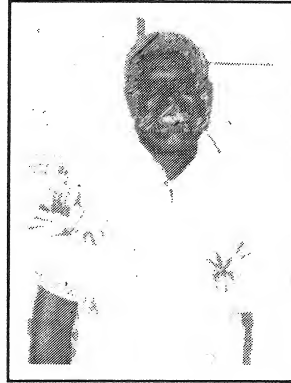
A compilation of papers presented by members of ten different religious organisations (including those from the Christian, Muslim and Hindu traditions) at Interfaith Search meetings during 1988. It marks the beginning of an interfaith search in Fiji and gives an insight into the religious beliefs of peoples from the three major traditions (and others) as they are lived and practiced in Fiji. The book is a useful resource for interfaith understanding.

GOD'S SPIRIT IN MISSION

Leslie Boseto

Awareness of God's Spirit in Mission

One of the realities witnessed in Canberra was the active presence of God's Spirit in His *OIKOUMENE* - His whole creation. Many people who have been and are struggling for their survival, security and identity experience the closeness and presence of the Spirit of God as they share their very life with one another. Listening to the struggles of the Aboriginal people and other indigenous peoples in the world, one thing which stands out is the fact that they feel Him, they look for Him, they experience Him, they trust Him, they are in conflict with Him, they repent towards Him, and they are blessed by Him.



Leslie Boseto

God the Creator, Sustainer and Renewer of the creation relates, touches, cares, protects, serves, empowers and supports His peoples through individuals, groups, families, tribes and churches. It is here that we see the interconnectedness of life and the active presence of God's Spirit in mission.

The uncreated Spirit who created this planet earth, who has given life to this planet earth and who has sustained this planet earth from the beginning (Gen. 1 and 2) is presently at work in mission with His people in every human community and in every locality. Ministers, priests, bishops, archbishops, popes, presidents and general secretaries of our churches must play the role of empowering by taking a towel and basin to wash these people's feet (John 13: 12-17).

The strategy of mission today after Canberra, for me, is to be more 'person empowering,' not just 'document empowering,' for the written word kills in the new covenant community. What is most needed today is to create a missionary environment in which young people, women, men and children relate to one another, honour and respect one another and leave the Holy Spirit to do its

mission - and not for you or me to waste too much of our time, money and paper to breathlessly organise it.

Responding to God's Designs

Another thing that became clearer to me in the course of our discussions and debates in Canberra concerning the present state of this planet earth was that human beings, without co-operating with the Creator, have gone beyond our limits. Degradation of the creation, global warming (the greenhouse effect), institutionalised racism, military activity and debt crises are all indications that we are ignoring our limits (Acts 17: 26). We have stepped over into 'holy ground' without listening to God's directions and commands.

The theme of the first Assembly of the World Council of Churches, held in Amsterdam, was GOD'S DESIGN AND MAN'S DISORDER. After forty-three years, our disorder has been worsening, because people are continually displaced, wasted and enslaved by educational systems, by political oppression, by male domination, by sexual abuse, by prostitution, by economic exploitation, by institutionalised racism, by militarisation and colonisation.

In the midst of our worsened situation of human disorder which has affected the whole creation, God's designs have been and are emerging. The collapse of ideologies, the breaking of barriers and winds of change which have swept over Eastern Europe and Africa, the continual struggles of indigenous peoples, the coming re-unification of South and North Korea, our theological concern for the Gospel and cultures, and the struggles of women and young people are all signs of the coming birth of God's real designs within His original creation. We may use missiles, nuclear weapons, national and international laws to suppress them or even to ignore their existence. However, the uncreated Spirit who created the Creation is presently active in the midst of these emerging realities. Mission today must recognise these realities and discern where God's Spirit is at work in order to be more responsible to empower the emerging design of God in the midst of our disorder.

To respond to God's design demands complete conversion or repentance; it demands ideological and theological repentance; it demands structural and institutional conversion; it demands leadership repentance inside the church and society. Mission in Christ's way, then, is not just a programme nicely worked out and documented from the churches' headquarters; but headquarters' response needs to be shaped and directed by God's Spirit who is already present and active with His people in their real situation.

Ecumenism for Mission

One thing that I have come to see in the emerging reality of God's original designs of His creation is that God's *OIKOUMENE* is discovered more and more from the experience of ordinary lay women and men at the grass-roots level. This reality was clearly demonstrated and reflected in the presentation of Professor Chung Hyun-Kyung, which was entitled *An Introduction to the Theological Theme*. One of the paragraphs from her paper, which supports what I want to share here, reads as follows:

The Spirit of this compassionate God has been always with us from the time of Creation. God gave birth to us and the whole universe with her life-giving breath (*Ruach*), the wind of life. This wind of life, this life-giving power of God as the Spirit, which enabled people to come out of Egypt, resurrected Christ from death and started the Church as a liberative community. We also experience the life-giving Spirit of God in our people's struggle for liberation, their cry for life and the beauty and gift of nature. The Spirit of God has been teaching us through the 'Survival Wisdom' of the poor, the screams of the Han-ridden spirits of our people and the blessings and curses of nature. Only when we can hear this cry for life and can see the signs of liberation are we able to recognise the Holy Spirit's activity in the midst of suffering creation.

Small island nation communities in the Pacific have been caught up in denominational divisions. If our concept of ecumenism continues to be remote from reality and exclusively confessional, then we cannot be ecumenically inclusive and openly responsive to where God, in His renewing and transforming Spirit, is already at work with His people. When Jesus said, 'The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He has chosen me to bring good news to the poor....,' this does not only mean that 'the poor' were without good news until Jesus went to them. The Spirit of God was already at work amongst and with the poor, hence Jesus was already with them. The economically poor, racially alienated and politically oppressed people in Egypt were not without God before Moses left the palace to be with them. The truth was that God was already there in the midst of His poor, alienated and oppressed people (Exodus 3: 7-12). The Call was not from heaven but from the grass-roots! 'Ecumenical reality' must direct the priority of Christ's mission today after Canberra! I have seen and experienced this trend very clearly before coming to Canberra. There are now an increasing number of sensitive and people-oriented leaders in the Pacific who have come to see and experience God's presence and the reality of His mission in our communal society.

God became a human being in order to unite humankind, not just to unite churches. While the World Council of Churches' first function is to call the churches to the goal of visible unity, I have come to see that the WCC is exclusively confining its conviction such that when all the member churches of the WCC will have theologically agreed to the Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry Documents and become one undivided church, then we can solve the divided humanity. So we preach 'the unity of the church and the unity of humankind,' or we preach 'the renewal of the church and the renewal of the whole creation.' But I am more and more convinced now that, unless the member churches of the World Council of Churches take Christ's mission and responsive confessionalism seriously, by confessing the Lordship of Christ in local ecumenism, we will continue to operate at an artificial level instead of what I call the grass-roots level.

The reality of the input in Canberra encourages me to participate more and more with the Spirit of a missionary God who has been and is already in mission amongst his people in Korea, in Africa, in the Pacific, amongst and with ethnic groups and indigenous peoples everywhere in the world (and even at a congregational and parish level).

Conclusion

For me, the Seventh Assembly of the World Council of Churches in Canberra has widened the scope of my convictions to see more clearly God's active presence in every place on our planet earth. And whatever takes place in each of our given localities has national, regional and global dimensions for Christ's mission.

My expectation of the prayer, 'COME, HOLY SPIRIT, RENEW THE WHOLE CREATION,' is still expecting His uncreated Spirit to create new historical events for its mission today in the Solomons and the Pacific.

(From an article written by Bishop Boseto for the International Review of Mission. The full article will appear in IRM, Vol. LXXXV, Nos. 319/320, July/October 1991.)

PATRIARCHY AND DEATH

Chung Hyun-Kyung

I no longer believe in an omnipotent, Macho, warrior God who rescues all good guys and punishes all bad guys. Rather, I rely on the compassionate God who weeps with us for life in the midst of cruel destruction of life.

...

One of the most crucial agendas for our generation is to learn how to live with the earth, promoting harmony, sustainability and diversity. Traditional Christian creation theology and Western thinking puts the human, especially men, at the centre of the created world and men have had the power to control and dominate the creation. Modern science and development models are based on this assumption. We should remember, however, that this kind of thinking is alien to many Asian people and the indigenous people of the world. For us the earth is the source of life and nature is 'sacred, purposeful and full of meaning.'

...

War is the consequence of the patriarchal culture of 'power-over.' In the patriarchal culture of hierarchy, winning for the dominant group's interest is more important than saving life. Throughout human history, women have mourned over the death, in war, of their beloved brothers, husbands and sons. Women know that patriarchy means death. When their men shed blood, women shed tears. Their powerful tears have been the redemptive, life-giving energy for the tearless men's history. Indeed, weeping has been 'the first prophetic action' in human history. Only when we have an ability to *suffer with* others (*compassion*) can we transform the 'culture of death' to the 'culture of life.'

...

Dear sisters and brothers, with the energy of the Holy Spirit let us tear apart all walls of division and the 'culture of death' which separate us. And let us participate in the Holy Spirit's Political-Economy of Life fighting for our life on this earth in solidarity with all living beings, and building communities for justice, peace and the integrity of creation. Wild wind of the Holy Spirit, blow to us. Let us welcome her, letting ourselves go in her wild rhythm of life. Come Holy Spirit, Renew the Whole Creation. Amen!

...

Reprinted from *The Disciple*, May 1991.

**BORN INTO A LIVING HOPE -
PROCLAIMING A LIVING HOPE
1991 Pacific Conference of Churches
Assembly Theme**

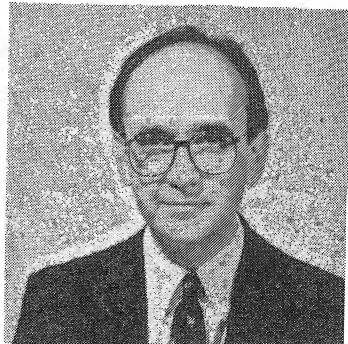
The sixth Assembly of the Pacific Conference of Churches will meet in Mele Village, Efate, Vanuatu from 25 August to 4 September this year. The theme for the Assembly is 'Born into a Living Hope - Proclaiming a Living Hope.' The sub-themes are: Worship and Life; Family and Community; Pacific Identity and the Gospel; Stewardship of the Pacific Inheritance; Smallness and Solidarity; and Empowering for Participation.

The Bible Studies on the Assembly theme will be led by Pothin Wete and David Esterline from the Biblical Studies Department of Pacific Theological College. They will explore themes of hope in Luke's Gospel and the Book of Isaiah. We present two of the studies here in the hope that they will be used in preparation for the Assembly.

**A NEW SIGN OF HOPE :
Biblical Reflection on Luke 4:16-30**

David Esterline

For an introduction to the Assembly themes, I suggest we attend a synagogue service at Nazareth, listen to the sermon of a young man recently returned home, and then watch, unable to intervene, as the congregation attempts to murder the preacher. This is the incident - Jesus' reading and sermon in the Nazareth synagogue and the ensuing fury of the hearers - that Luke uses to introduce the ministry of Jesus. In it we can find not only Luke's introduction to Jesus but also (with a



David Esterline

little patient probing) a careful outline of issues central to the themes of the Assembly.

Born into a Living Hope. Proclaiming a Living Hope. These themes raise two basic questions: Who has been born? Or, to put it another way, To whom has the gift of 'new birth into a living hope' been given? The second question is connected to the second half of the theme: What, exactly, is this hope that we have been born into? What is the hope that we speak of proclaiming? Both questions are answered, forcefully, in Luke 4: 16-30.

Luke is widely respected not only for the craft of his writing, his ability to tell a good story, but also for the care with which he selects and presents his material. This sermon at Nazareth has been placed by Luke at the very outset of Jesus' ministry; in Luke's presentation, these are the first public words of Jesus. It is clear that he means us to give them careful attention.

Jesus returned to his hometown and, as he always did on the Sabbath, went along to the synagogue. From the early literature of the rabbis it is possible to reconstruct the format of the service; if we understand the basic liturgical flow we will be in a much better position to appreciate the impact of Jesus' words. The people would gather, taking their seats according to tradition: the more distinguished members took the front places and the younger and less important ones sat toward the back. Men and women most likely sat separately. Ten men had to be present for the service to take place.

The service began with the Shema' (possibly recited antiphonally between the leader and the people), the great text of Israel found in Deut. 6: 4-9 and 11: 13-21, which begins:

Hear, O Israel: The LORD is our God, the LORD is One.
You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, and with all
your soul, and with all your might.
These words which I command you this day shall be upon your
heart;
You shall teach them diligently to your children,
You shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you
walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise...

In addition to the basic statement of belief, the Shema' served as a call to attention, a call to recognise that this is God's word that is going to be read and

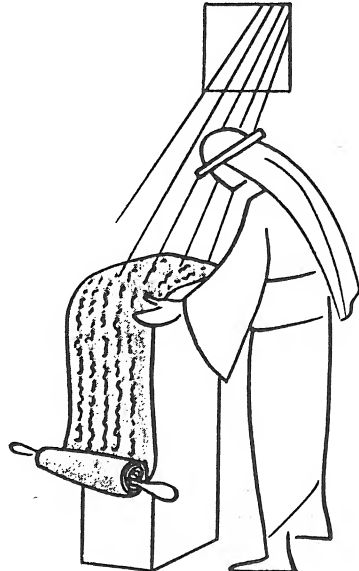
discussed and that all present had better pay attention.

Then came the reading of the Law, for which a text was set for each Sabbath in the time of Jesus, followed by the reading of the prophets and the sermon - and this is where Jesus comes in. According to Luke's account, Jesus was handed the scroll of the prophet Isaiah and opened it to the text which we now know as chapter 61, verses 1 and 2. (Is it possible that Jesus had made an arrangement with the synagogue attendant beforehand, asking that this particular scroll be handed to him when time came? What is clear is that while the reading of the Law was set at this point in the history of the synagogue, the selection of a passage from the prophets was left up to the reader.) Jesus unrolled the scroll, found the place he was looking for, and began to read:

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
because he has annointed me to bring the good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery
of sight to the blind,
to let the oppressed go free,
to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour.

Then he rolled up the scroll, handed it back to the attendant, and sat down - to preach. Now we stand up when we preach, but then the Scriptures were read standing up, maybe giving them special authority, while the speaker sat down to preach.

Everyone was quiet, expectant. He had read the text very well; what would he say? Every eye was fixed on him. Then Jesus began, significantly, with the word TODAY. (This is the first public word, after the reading, that Luke records of Jesus' ministry.) Today, this scripture that you have just heard has been fulfilled, here, in your hearing. Today, all of your expectations, all of the promises, have been gathered up and fulfilled here, today. The Spirit of the Lord is upon me. And the people loved it. They looked at each other and said, 'My, hasn't he



spoken well. And you know, he is one of us. He is the son of Joseph, the carpenter.' The local boy had made good; his hometown people were proud of him.

But then there was a change, a sudden, drastic shift. These townspeople, who were enjoying the success of their local boy, became angry. In fact, by the end of the passage, by verse 28, so far from being proud of and accepting Jesus, they actually tried to murder him. What happened? What happened to make this crowd which was so happy with their local boy become so full of wrath that they would attempt murder? This is a central question in the passage - and the one we should begin with.

Jesus suggested to his hearers that they would likely quote a proverb to him, a proverb like: Charity begins at home. This traditional saying catches the meaning of the proverb that is given in verse 23: Doctor, heal yourself; that is, do those good things that we have heard you have done in Capernaum, do them here for us. After all, we are your own people. Charity begins at home. But Jesus, knowing something of this selfish, self-centred way the people were thinking, reminded them of two stories out of their own tradition, and this is where the people became angry.

The two Old Testament stories are well known. Many people were hungry in Israel during the days of famine, but God chose to feed a widow who was not even an Israelite. Elijah was sent to none of the hungry people in Israel, but rather to a poor woman, a widow in the land of Sidon. An outsider, a foreigner, a woman. Naaman was another outsider, a Syrian, and a leper - though I hardly think that he was poor. When he came to Israel to seek healing he came with horses and chariots and brought a vast sum of money as a gift which, of course, was not needed. In fact, all that was needed was obedience and the recognition that he was needy, something that Naaman found difficult to give. As Jesus said to the synagogue congregation, There were many lepers in Israel in the time of the prophet Elisha, and none of them was healed, but only Naaman, the rich military man from Syria.

Born Into a Living Hope : Worksheet One

What happened? What happened to turn this congregation from giving congratulations to attempting murder?

Following the sermon, Jesus told the people that they might be thinking of a wise saying similar to the English proverb: 'Charity begins at home.' That is, if you are going to be doing good in the towns round about, you should also do so here, at home. 'Doctor, heal yourself.' Jesus followed this up with a reminder of two stories from the Old Testament, the account of the Widow of Zarephath and Naaman the Syrian.

- A. What do these two stories from the Old Testament have in common? (They can be found in 1 Kings 17: 8 ff. and 2 Kings 5.)
- B. What is the point that Jesus was making by mentioning these stories? Or, to put the question another way,
- C. What made the people change their minds about this young preacher? One minute they were congratulating and praising him for his sermon, and the next they were trying to murder him. Why?

When the answers to these questions, and the point Jesus was making, come clear, it is possible to move on to the leading question:

To whom has this new birth into a living hope been given?

Now, what exactly was it that Jesus was saying that day in the synagogue? What was the point of the text he chose and the way he presented it? Again, notice the significance that Luke gives to this sermon; he presents it as the first public message of Jesus.

Proclaiming a Living Hope : Worksheet Two

What was the message that Jesus presented in this first sermon to the congregation at Nazareth?

Jesus carefully selected a text from the Old Testament. He read it (quite well, according to the members of the congregation) and sat down to preach. We have only a few sentences from his sermon, but they are very significant. From the text, sermon, and the following application, Luke gives us quite an introduction to Jesus.

- A. What is the hope in the text from Isaiah? (The text is Isaiah 61: 1 f. It is helpful to recognise that the 'year of the Lord's favour' is a reference to the Sabbatical and Jubilee Years set out in Leviticus 25 and Deuteronomy 15.)
- B. What is the hope in the sermon?
- C. What is the hope in the following confrontation?

Now, what is the hope that Jesus proclaimed in terms that are understandable and relevant to the Pacific and to our own specific situations?

- D. What is the 'good news to the poor'?
- E. Who are the captives, and how are they to be released?
- F. Who are the blind and the oppressed, and how are they to be given sight and set free?
- G. 'This is the year of the Lord's favour.' What does this most basic declaration of hope mean for us, for the Pacific, and for those attending the Assembly?

ISRAEL'S HERITAGE OF HOPE: Biblical Reflection on Isaiah 54: 1-17

Pothin Wete

Background and Outline

The prophet composed this poem to encourage the Israelite exiles after the fall of Babylon. He had observed their great insecurity (see v. 11), their inner division (v. 15), and their feeling that God had turned away from them (v. 1). They were not yet ready for the mission of suffering described in the previous poem (52:13 - 53:12). They needed hope which could give them strength and courage to go forward into the unknown future.



Pothin Wete

Many Christians today are experiencing insecurity and inner conflicts and have doubts about God's power and love. This poem can still give hope to those who need strength and courage to live into the future. 'In this hope,' wrote Paul, 'we are saved.' (Rom. 8: 24)

Part 1 Hope for a new people (vv. 1-8)

- 1-3: The new people and the nations.
- 4-5: A heartwarming welcome back home
- 6-8: A love which never fails

Part 2 Hope for a new world (vv. 9-17)

- 9-10: Firm foundations
- 11-15: The beautiful city of the future
- 16-17: Security in a violent world

Interpretation - Israel's Heritage of Hope (v. 17)

The Heritage

At the time of the Exodus from Egypt, the Hebrews were encouraged to endure hardship, division and danger by God's promise to give them a land.

The promised land was their 'heritage' or inheritance from God (see Psalm 135: 21-22). The prophet who composed this poem used the same word, 'heritage,' to describe God's promise to the Israelite exiles in Babylon at the beginning of their new 'exodus'. He told them of God's promise to make them a new people and give them a new world. This promise gave them hope, and the hope made them strong.

The Servants of the Lord

This is the only time that this prophet used the plural form 'servants.' Except for this verse, he always used 'servant' in the singular form. Here he was probably referring to the 'offspring' or 'generation' of the Servant of Isaiah (53: 8, 10). He was thinking about the communities of faithful people in every nation who continue the work of the Servant. 'Servants of the Lord' is a good description of Christian communities today in every nation.

Their Vindication

In the RSV, 'vindication' is here used to translate the Hebrew word which is elsewhere translated as 'righteousness' or 'deliverance.' Here it means the final fulfillment of God's promises, when the hope of a new people in a new world will come true.

Hope For a New People - The New People and the Nations (vv. 1-3)

Many New Descendants (v. 1)

The prophet was comparing the Israelite exiles with 'captive Zion' and gave them hope for many new children. In previous poems he had told them that these children would be born among the nations (49: 20-23) and would become sons and daughters of Israel through faith (44: 4).

The World, Your Promised Land (v. 3a)

When the prophet said that the Israelites would spread abroad, he was referring to a tradition about Jacob. God had promised Jacob in a dream that he would 'spread abroad' in all directions and bring blessing to the nations (Gen. 28: 14).

One way to interpret that promise was that the Israelites would occupy the whole land of Canaan. But the prophet saw a different meaning. He thought of them spreading abroad over the whole earth, so that they could bring blessing to the nations. This interpretation of the promise came true when the early church began to 'spread abroad' and is coming true in the present day.

The Nations, Your Covenant Family (v. 3bc)

The Hebrew word which is here translated 'possess' can have two meanings: (1) to drive out by conquering or (2) to receive as an inheritance. Both meanings are present in Deuteronomy 9: 1, 6. This is a tradition about the conquest of Canaan. Israel would 'dispossess' the nations of Canaan, and 'possess' the promises of God.

The prophet applied the second meaning of the Hebrew word to the nations. He meant that Israel would one day receive the nations as members of the covenant family. Thus the descendants of Israel would themselves be fellow members of the nations among whom they lived. Loyalty of the God of Israel would not make them any less loyal to their own nation, because the God of Israel is also the 'God of the whole earth.' When the prophet said they would work to make desolate cities full of people once again, he was referring not only to Judah but to the cities destroyed by war in every nation.

We find the same idea in the command of the risen Christ to 'make disciples of all nations' (Matt. 28 :19). This command is to make the nations members of God's covenant family. In Ephesians 3: 6, this is proclaimed as a surprising discovery - that 'the nations' (the word is translated 'gentiles' in the RSV) are fellow heirs, members of the same body.

A Heartwarming Welcome Back Home (vv. 4-5)

The prophet was saying once again to the Israelite exiles that God was fully prepared to welcome them back into His love and His service.

He used six titles for God, five of which explain God's welcome for Israel, and one, the last, which refers to a welcome for all nations:

1. God was like Israel's husband, ready to take the unfaithful wife back and forgive everything (see Is. 40: 2).
2. God was like Israel's close relative or 'redeemer,' who was ready to rescue her from captivity.
3. God was like a craftsman ('maker'), ready to remake His people.
4. God was Israel's Holy One, who would make His people holy once again, and use them for His holy purpose.
5. God was Lord of Hosts, ready to use all the forces of nature and history to help His people.
6. God was God of the whole earth, and one day all nations would worship Him.

A Love Which Never Fails (vv. 6-8)

The most important truth about God is not that He punishes sinners, but that He loves His people (see Is. 43: 4) with a love that will never change. Love is action. Three verbs describe God's love in action:

1. God will *gather* them from the nations to make them a people once again. God showed this same sort of love in action in Jesus the Good Shepherd (John 10: 11) who came to gather the lost sheep of the House of Israel (Matt. 10: 16) and make them into a new people (1 Peter 2: 9-10).
2. God will *have compassion* on His people like a mother (see Is. 49: 15 and 43: 2) when they face troubles (Is. 49: 10-11). God showed this same compassion in Jesus who healed and cared for the sick (Matt. 14: 14), the lost (Matt. 9: 36), the hungry (Matt. 15: 30) and the sorrowing (Luke 7: 13).
3. God has *called* His people to have a part in the works of love, gathering the lost, showing compassion on the suffering.

Hope for a New World (vv. 9-17)

Firm Foundations (vv. 9-10) - The prophet was comparing the West Asian world of the sixth century BC with the world in the time of Noah. In Noah's day the waters of the flood covered all the mountains and hills. In the sixth century BC, the wars fought by Assyria, Babylon and Persia had destroyed the foundations of the old order. In Noah's day God's foundation for a new order was His covenant with Noah and his descendants (Gen. 9: 9, 18-19). In the sixth century God's new foundation would be His covenant of peace with the remnant of Israel and their descendants.

The Beautiful City of God (vv. 11-15) - The prophet began by describing the Israelite exiles as 'storm-tossed' in a small boat on a stormy sea. As a contrast to their present extreme insecurity, he showed them a picture of the city of the future. He described this city as built with beautiful precious stones, green as the forest, blue as the sky, and gold as sunrise. Probably the author who described the New Jerusalem in Revelation 21: 18-21 borrowed some of his ideas from this chapter of Isaiah. As in Revelation, this city would also be open to the nations (Rev. 21: 24; 22: 2).

Security in a Violent World (vv. 16-17a) - At the end of the poem the prophet turned once again to the actual situation. Peace was being destroyed by evil-speaking and violence. The metal-smiths were making weapons of war. For the servants of God, however, there is the promise that none of these destructive powers can succeed against God's covenant of peace.

Response to Hope - When the prophet described the hope of the Israelite exiles for a new people and a new world, he wanted to strengthen them to go forward into the future. Instead of weeping, they sing and rejoice (v. 1). Instead of turning inward and trying to preserve their own lives, they should turn outward and prepare to accept new peoples and nations into their 'tent,' even changing their traditions and way of life if necessary ('stretching out the curtains, and lengthening the cords,' v. 2). Instead of forgetting their own faith and identity, they should renew their commitment ('strengthen your stakes,' v. 2). Instead of giving in to despair or defeat, they should accept God's forgiveness and respond to His call to practice love (vv. 6-8). Instead of standing hopeless because the foundations of the old order have been destroyed, they should build for the future city of God with acts of peace and righteousness, and work for the end of oppression, terror and enmity.

Application, Discussion, Research

1. Compare the ideas about hope in Isaiah 54 with those in Peter 1. In what ways are they similar or different? In what way, if any, is each related to the Exodus idea of salvation?
2. Which of the five descriptions of a troubled Israel in this poem would best fit any congregation you know?
3. Which of the images of hope in the passage are most relevant for the churches of the Pacific as they look toward the next century?

BOOK NOTE

THE CALL TO BE JUST - An Introduction to the Social Teaching of the Catholic Church, edited by J. Morrissey and R. Keelan. Suva: Society of St Columban, 1990.

This new publication presents a Christian response to many concerns of social justice and moral issues challenging Pacific Island societies today. Even though the emphasis is given to the social teaching of the Catholic Church, readers will find principles of social justice common to many schools of Christian ethics. The thirteen chapters are mainly a collation of Father John Morrissey's lecture notes, compiled while he was teaching Christian Ethics at Pacific Regional Seminary (1983-1988).

The style of writing is simple and clear, and the topics cover a wide range of social concerns for the Christian community: Biblical foundations for social justice, the mission of the Church, the Church's witness to justice, Church and politics, poverty and the poor, the meaning of work and the rights and responsibilities of workers, and environmental issues.

Anyone who is involved in the growing understanding and practice of justice in the Pacific will appreciate this new publication. It provides a good text for study and adult discussion groups.

THE CALL TO BE JUST can be obtained from the Society of St Columban, P. O. Box 3578, Samabula, Fiji. Price \$7-50 plus postage.

RENAÎTRE POUR UNE ESPERANCE VIVANTE - PROCLAMER UNE ESPERANCE VIVANTE

Thème de l'Assemblée de la Conférence des Eglises du Pacifique 1991

La sixième Assemblée Générale de la Conférence des Eglises du Pacifique se tiendra du 25 Août au 4 Septembre cette année à Vanuatu, dans le village de Mele, sur l'île Efate. Le thème de l'Assemblée est "Renaître pour une espérance vivante - proclamer une espérance vivante". Les sous-thèmes sont: Culte et vie; Famille et communauté; Identité du Pacifique et l'évangile; Gestion du patrimoine du Pacifique; Petitesse et solidarité; Stimuler la participation.

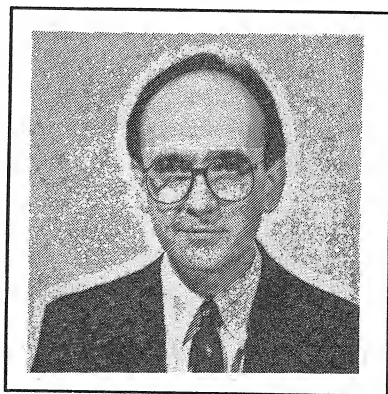
Les études bibliques sur le thème de l'Assemblée seront présentées par Pothin Wete et David Esterline du département d'études bibliques du Collège théologique du Pacifique (PTC). Ils exploreront les thèmes d'espérance dans l'évangile de Luc et le livre d'Esaië. Nous vous présentons ici deux de ces études en espérant qu'elles seront utilisées dans les préparations à l'Assemblée.

UN NOUVEAU SIGNE D'ESPERANCE

Réflexion biblique sur Luc 4.16-30

David Esterline

Pour nous familiariser avec le thème de l'Assemblée, je propose que nous assistions à un service dans une synagogue à Nazareth. Écoutons le sermon d'un jeune homme de retour depuis peu dans sa ville natale et observons, sans pouvoir intervenir, comment ce jeune prédicateur devient victime d'une tentative d'assassinat perpétrée par la congrégation. Luc utilise cet incident - la lecture de Jésus, son sermon dans la



David Esterline

synagogue de Nazareth et la fureur de l'auditoire en réponse à son message - pour nous introduire au ministère de Jésus. Dans son récit nous trouvons non seulement sa présentation du personnage de Jésus mais aussi, avec un peu de recherche, un premier accès aux éléments fondamentaux du thème de l'Assemblée.

Renaître pour une espérance vivante. Proclamer une espérance vivante. Ces thèmes soulèvent deux questions fondamentales: Qui renaît? Ou, autrement dit, à qui est-elle offerte, la renaissance pour une espérance vivante? La deuxième question se rapporte à la deuxième partie du thème: Quelle est précisément cette espérance pour laquelle nous renaissions? Quelle est cette espérance qu'il s'agit de proclamer? Les réponses à ces deux questions se révèlent dans Luc 4. 16-30.

Luc est très respecté non seulement pour ses qualités d'écrivain et son habilité de narration, mais aussi pour le soin avec lequel il choisit et présente son travail. Dans son évangile il situe ce sermon de Nazareth tout au début du ministère de Jésus et, selon sa présentation, il s'agit des premières paroles de Jésus en public. Il est évident qu'elles méritent notre attention particulière.

De retour dans la ville où il a été élevé, Jésus se rendit à la synagogue comme il était son habitude le jour du sabbat. Il est possible de reconstituer l'ordre d'un tel service en se basant sur les premiers écrits rabbiniques. Si nous comprenons le déroulement liturgique de base, nous pouvons plus facilement apprécier l'effet du discours de Jésus sur le public. Les gens se rassemblaient, s'asseyaient conformément aux règles de la tradition, c'est-à-dire les membres les plus distingués se plaçaient devant, tandis que les plus jeunes et les moins importants restaient à l'arrière. Très probablement, hommes et femmes s'asseyaient séparément et il fallait la présence de dix hommes au moins pour que le service puisse avoir lieu.

Le service commençait avec le *Shema* (probablement recité en antiphoné avec le lecteur d'un côté et la congrégation de l'autre), le grand texte d'Israël que l'on trouve dans Deut. 6.4-9 et 11.13-21 et qui commence ainsi:

Ecoute, Israël! Le SEIGNEUR notre Dieu est le SEIGNEUR UN.

Tu aimeras le SEIGNEUR ton Dieu de tout ton cœur, de tout ton être, de toute ta force.

Les paroles de commandement que je te donne aujourd'hui seront présentes en ton cœur;

Tu les répéteras à tes fils;

Tu les leur diras quand tu resteras chez toi et quand tu marcheras sur la route, quand tu seras couché et quand tu seras debout;...

En plus de la simple déclaration de foi, le *Shema* était une sorte d'invocation, une invitation à reconnaître que c'est la parole de Dieu qui était lue et discutée et que tous ceux présents se devaient d'écouter attentivement.

Il y avait ensuite la lecture de la Loi et du temps de Jésus, un passage était sélectionné pour chaque sabbat. Il y avait ensuite, la lecture des prophètes, puis le sermon - c'est ici que Jésus entre en scène. Selon le récit de Luc, on lui remit le rouleau contenant le texte du prophète Esaïe, et il l'ouvrit au passage que nous connaissons aujourd'hui comme étant le chapitre 61, versets 1 et 2. (Est-il probable que Jésus se soit arrangé auparavant avec le responsable de la synagogue, afin que ce rouleau précis lui soit remis au moment voulu? Ce qui est certain c'est qu'alors que la Loi devait être lue à ce moment précis selon l'histoire de la synagogue, le lecteur avait le choix du texte des prophètes.) Jésus déroula le parchemin, trouva le texte qu'il cherchait et commença à réciter:

L'Esprit du Seigneur est sur moi:

Parce qu'il m'a conféré l'onction pour annoncer la bonne nouvelle aux pauvres.

Il m'a envoyé proclamer aux captifs la libération et aux aveugles le retour à la vue,

Renvoyer les opprimés en liberté,

Proclamer une année de faveur du Seigneur.

Puis, il roula le livre, le rendit au responsable de la synagogue, et s'assit - pour prêcher. De nos jours, on se lève pour prononcer le sermon, alors qu'à l'époque, la lecture de l'Ecriture se faisait debout, peut-être pour lui donner une certaine autorité, et on s'asseyait pour prononcer le sermon.

Tout le monde gardait le silence et attendait. Il avait parfaitement lu le texte. Qu'allait-il dire? Tous les yeux étaient fixés sur lui. Jésus commença à parler et le premier mot qu'il prononça fut révélateur: AUJOURD'HUI. (Selon le récit de Luc, ce fut le premier mot - mise à part la lecture - que Jésus prononça en public dans le cadre de son ministère.) Aujourd'hui, la Parole que vous venez d'entendre est accomplie, ici-même. Aujourd'hui, toutes vos attentes, toutes les promesses sont rassemblées et accomplies ici, aujourd'hui. L'Esprit du Seigneur est sur moi. Tout le monde était d'accord. Ils se regardaient en disant:

"Qu'est-ce qu'il parle bien! Et il est un des nôtres! Il est le fils de Joseph, le charpentier." Le jeune homme bien de chez eux se débrouillait si bien! Ils étaient fiers de lui.

Cependant, il y eut un brusque changement, un soudain revirement total. Ces mêmes gens qui, un instant plus tôt s'étaient réjouis du succès de ce jeune homme de leur ville, se mirent tout à coup en colère. En fait, vers la fin du passage, au verset 28, on lit que, loin d'être fiers de lui, ils tentèrent de le tuer. Que s'est-il passé? Qu'est-ce qui a fait que cette foule si fière de leur garçon, se met en rage au point de vouloir le tuer? Voici une des questions fondamentales du passage - et c'est par elle que nous devons commencer.

Jésus s'attendait à ce que son auditoire lui cite un proverbe du genre "La charité commence par soi-même." Ce proverbe traditionnel reflète le sens du dicton que nous trouvons au verset 23: "Médecin, guéris-toi toi-même," autrement dit, "toutes ces choses merveilleuses que tu as faites à Capharnaüm, d'après ce qu'on dit, fais-les ici pour nous. Nous sommes ton peuple, après tout." La charité commence par soi-même. Jésus, toutefois, connaissant cette attitude égoïste des gens, leur rappela deux histoires issues de leur propre tradition. Ce fut à ce moment précis que les gens se mirent en colère.

Ces deux histoires de l'Ancien Testament sont bien connues. Pendant les périodes de famine, beaucoup de gens souffraient, mais Dieu choisit d'aider une veuve qui n'était même pas une Israélite. Elie fut envoyé non pas aux peuples affamés d'Israël, mais à une veuve du pays de Sidon. Une personne de l'extérieur, une étrangère et en plus une femme. Naaman était un autre étranger, un Syrien et lépreux - cependant, je ne pense pas qu'il était pauvre. Lorsqu'il arriva en Israël pour se faire soigner, il vint avec des chevaux et des chariots et il amena avec lui une grosse somme d'argent, en cadeau, ce qui n'était évidemment pas nécessaire. Au fond, tout ce qu'il fallait c'était obéir et reconnaître le fait qu'il était dans le besoin, mais pour Naaman c'était une chose difficile à accepter. Comme Jésus le dit à la congrégation de la Synagogue, il y avait beaucoup de lépreux à Israël au temps du prophète Elisha et aucun parmi eux ne fut guéri à l'exception de Naaman, le riche militaire syrien.

Renâître pour une espérance vivante: Feuille d'étude n°1

Que s'est-il passé? Qu'est-ce qui a poussé cette congrégation de passer des louanges à la tentative de meurtre?

Après le sermon, Jésus dit à son auditoire qu'il se rappelait sûrement le vieux proverbe qui dit que "la charité commence par soi-même". En d'autres termes cela veut dire que si l'on fait de bonnes œuvres dans les villes avoisinantes, il fallait en faire autant chez soi. "Médecin, guéris-toi toi-même". Ensuite Jésus leur rappela les deux histoires de l'Ancien Testament, à savoir l'histoire de la veuve de Sarepta et celle de Namaan, le Syrien.

- A. Quels sont les points communs de ces deux histoires de l'Ancien Testament? (Vous les trouverez dans 1 Rois 17.8 et 2 Rois 5.)
- B. Quelle était l'intention de Jésus en évoquant ces histoires? Ou, autrement dit:
- C. Qu'est-ce qui a fait que les gens ont soudainement changé d'attitude vis à vis du jeune prédicateur? Tout d'abord, ils le félicitent et lui font des louanges au sujet de son message et dans la minute qui suit ils essayent de le tuer. Pourquoi?

Lorsque vous avez trouvé des réponses à ces questions et saisi ce que Jésus voulait dire, vous pouvez passer à la question clé:

A qui est offert la nouvelle naissance pour une espérance vivante?

Maintenant, nous allons voir ce que Jésus a vraiment dit ce jour-là dans la Synagogue. Quel fut la portée du texte qu'il a choisi et la manière dont il l'a présenté? Notez, encore une fois, l'importance que Luc attribue à ce sermon; il le présente comme le premier message public de Jésus.

Proclamer une espérance vivante: feuille d'étude n° 2

Quel était le message du premier sermon de Jésus prononcé à la Synagogue de Nazareth?

Jésus a choisi avec soin un texte de l'Ancien Testament. Il le lut (assez remarquablement, selon les membres de la Synagogue) et il s'assit pour prêcher. Nous ne disposons que de quelques phrases de son discours, mais elles sont d'autant plus révélatrices. A travers le texte, le sermon et la situation qui s'ensuit, Luc nous fournit un portrait assez complet du personnage de Jésus.

- A. Quelle est l'espérance dans le texte d'Esaïe? (Il s'agit d'Esaïe 61.1s. Il convient ici de rappeler que "l'année de la faveur du Seigneur" fait référence à l'année sabbatique et l'année de jubilé mentionnées dans Lévitique 25 et Deutéronome 15.)
- B. Quelle est l'espérance dans le sermon?
- C. Quelle est l'espérance dans la confrontation qui s'ensuit?

Maintenant, quelle est l'espérance proclamée par Jésus traduite dans un langage compréhensible et applicable au Pacifique et à nos propres situations spécifiques.

- D. Quelle est la "bonne nouvelle pour les pauvres"?
- E. Qui sont les captifs, et comment peuvent-ils être libérés?
- F. Qui sont les aveugles et les opprimés, et comment peuvent-ils recouvrer la vue et la liberté?
- G. "Ceci est l'année de la faveur du Seigneur." Que signifie pour nous cette déclaration fondamentale d'espérance, que signifie-t-elle pour le Pacifique et pour tous ceux qui assisterons à l'Assemblée Générale?

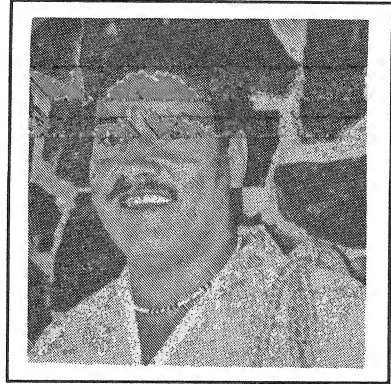
ISRAEL HERITE L'ESPERANCE

Réflexion biblique sur Esaïe 54.1-17

Pothin Wete

Contexte et plan

Le prophète a composé ce poème pour encourager les exilés israélites après la chute de Babylone. Il avait observé leur grande insécurité (voir v. 11), leur division interne (v.15) et le sentiment parmi eux que Dieu les a abandonnés (v.1). Ils n'étaient pas encore prêts pour la mission de souffrances évoquée dans un des poèmes précédents (52.13 - 53.12). Ils avaient besoin d'espérance pour prendre de la force et du courage afin avancer vers un avenir incertain.



Pothin Wete

De nos jours, de nombreux chrétiens vivent dans l'insécurité, les conflits intérieurs et le doute quant au pouvoir et l'amour de Dieu. Ce poème peut donner de l'espérance à ceux qui manquent la force et le courage pour continuer à vivre dans l'avenir. "Car nous avons été sauvés, mais c'est en espérance." (Rom 8.24)

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|----------|--|
| Partie 1 | L'espérance d'un peuple nouveau (vv.1-8) |
| 1-3: | Le peuple nouveau et les nations |
| 4-5: | Un accueil chaleureux chez soi (à la maison) |
| 6-8: | L'amour qui ne disparaît jamais |
| Partie 2 | L'espérance d'un monde nouveau (vv.9-17) |
| 9-10: | Des fondations solides |
| 11-15: | La belle cité de l'avenir |
| 16-17: | La sécurité dans un monde violent |

Interprétation - Israël hérite l'espérance (v.17)

L'héritage

A l'époque de l'Exode d'Egypte, si les Hébreux avaient le courage de supporter la dureté, la division et le danger, c'était grâce à la promesse de Dieu qu'une terre leur sera donnée.

La terre promise était l'"héritage" ou le patrimoine qu'ils ont reçu de Dieu (voir psaume 135.21-22). L'auteur de ce poème a utilisé le même terme d'"héritage" pour décrire la promesse que Dieu a fait aux exilés israélites à Babylone au début de leur nouvelle "Exode". Il leur parlait de la promesse de Dieu afin de faire d'eux un peuple nouveau et de leur donner un monde nouveau. C'est cette promesse qui leur donnait de l'espérance et c'est l'espérance qui leur donnait de la force.

Les serviteurs du Seigneur

Ce verset est le seul où cette prophète a employé le terme au pluriel: "serviteurs". Auparavant il avait toujours utilisé "serviteur" au singulier. Il se peut qu'ici l'auteur a voulu faire référence à "progéniture" ou "génération" du Serviteur d'Esaié (53.8,10). Il pensait aux communautés des fidèles dans tous les pays qui poursuivent le travail de Serviteur. "Serviteurs du Seigneur" est une très bonne description des communautés chrétiennes d'aujourd'hui dans le monde entier.

Leur victoire

Dans la RSV (*Revised Standard Version*), le terme *vindication*, "victoire", a été choisi pour traduire le terme hébreu qui, dans d'autres traductions de la Bible, est traduit par "justice" ou "délivrance". Ici il signifie l'accomplissement final des promesses de Dieu, le moment où l'espérance d'un peuple nouveau dans un monde nouveau devient réalité.

L'espérance d'un peuple nouveau - Le peuple nouveau et les nations (vv.1-3)

De nombreux descendants (v.1)

Le prophète a comparé les exilés israélites avec la "captive Sion" et leur a donné l'espérance qu'ils allaient donner naissance à de nombreux enfants. Dans des poèmes précédents il leur avait dit que ces enfants allaient naître à travers les nations (49.20-23) et devenir les fils et les filles d'Israël par la foi (44.4).

Le monde, votre terre promise (v.3a)

En disant que les israélites allaient se répandre au-delà les frontières, le prophète faisait référence à une tradition relative à Jacob. Dans un rêve, Dieu avait promis à Jacob qu'il allait "se répandre" dans toutes les directions et apporter la bénédiction aux nations (Gen 28.14).

Une façon d'interpréter cette promesse serait que les israélites allaient occuper le pays de Canaan tout entier. Mais le prophète y voyait une signification différente. Il entendait que les israélites allaient se répandre dans le monde entier afin d'apporter la bénédiction à toutes les nations. Cette interprétation est devenue réalité lorsque l'église primitive commençait à "se répandre dans le monde, et elle continue à s'accomplir jusqu'à nos jours.

Les nations, votre famille de l'alliance (v.3bc)

Le terme hébreu qui est ici traduit par "posséder" a deux sens: (1) chasser en conquérant ou (2) recevoir en héritage. Les deux acceptions sont présentes dans Deutéronome 9.1,6. Il s'agit d'une tradition concernant la conquête de Canaan. Israël "dépossédera" les nations de Canaan et possédera les promesses de Dieu.

Le prophète a appliqué aux nations la deuxième signification du terme hébreu. Il voulait dire qu'Israël allait recevoir les nations en tant que membres de la famille de l'alliance. Donc les descendants d'Israël seraient eux-même des membres de la communauté des nations parmi lesquelles ils vivaient. La loyauté du Dieu d'Israël ne diminuerait pas leur loyauté envers leur propre nation parce que le Dieu d'Israël est aussi le "Dieu du monde entier". Lorsque le prophète dit qu'ils allaient travailler afin de remplir les cités abandonnées, il faisait référence à Juda, certes, mais il pensait aussi à toutes les villes détruites par la guerre dans le monde entier.

Nous trouvons la même idée dans le commandement du Christ ressuscité, à savoir de “faire de toutes les nations des disciples” (Mt 28.19). La commande est de faire de toutes les nations des membres de la famille de l’alliance de Dieu. Dans Ephésiens 3.6, cela est proclamé comme une découverte surprenante - que “les nations” (dans la RSV le terme est traduit par “*gentiles*” - païens) seront admis au même héritage, membres du même corps.

Un accueil chaleureux au retour (vv.4-5)

Le prophète a rappelé aux exilés israélites que Dieu était prêt à les accueillir à nouveau dans Son amour et Son service.

Il a attribué à Dieu six titres, dont les cinq premiers expliquent l’accueil que Dieu offre à Israël tandis que le dernier fait référence à l’accueil de toutes les nations:

1. Dieu était comme l’époux d’Israël, prêt à reprendre l’épouse infidèle et à tout pardonner (voir Es 40.2).
2. Dieu était comme un parent proche ou comme un “*rédempteur*” qui était prêt à la sauver de sa captivité.
3. Dieu était comme un artisan (“celui qui a fait”) prêt à refaire son peuple.
4. Dieu était comme le Saint d’Israël, qui à nouveau rendait son peuple saint et l’utilisait pour ses buts saints.
5. Dieu était le Seigneur des hôtes, prêt à mobiliser toutes les forces de la nature et de l’Histoire pour aider son peuple.
6. Dieu était le Dieu de toute la terre et toutes les nations allaient, un jour, l’adorer.

Un amour qui ne disparaît jamais (vv. 6-8)

La vérité la plus importante sur Dieu n’est pas qu’Il punit les pécheurs, mais qu’Il aime son peuple (voir Es 43.4) d’un amour qui ne changera jamais. L’amour c’est de l’action. Les trois concepts suivants décrivent l’amour de Dieu dans l’action:

1. Dieu les rassemblera parmi les nations afin d'en faire à nouveau un seul peuple. Ce même amour dans l'action, Dieu l'a manifesté à travers Jésus le bon berger (Jean 10.11) qui est venu rassembler les brebis perdus de la maison d'Israël (Mt 10.36) et d'en faire un nouveau peuple (1 Pierre 2.9-10).
2. Dieu aura compassion de Son peuple telle une mère (voir Es 49.15 et 43.2) en temps de difficultés (Es 49.10-11). Dieu a montré la même compassion en Jésus qui guérissait et soignait les malades (Mt 14.14), les perdus (Mt 9.36), les affamés (Mt 15.30) et les accablés (Luke 7.13).
3. Dieu a appelé Son peuple à participer dans Son oeuvre d'amour en rassemblant les perdus et en ayant compassion des souffrants.

Espérance d'un monde nouveau (vv. 9-17)

Une fondation solide (vv.9-10) - Le prophète compare l'Asie occidentale du sixième siècle av. J-C avec le monde du temps de Noé. Au temps de Noé les eaux du déluge couvraient toutes les montagnes et collines. Au sixième siècle av. J-C, les guerres d'Assyrie, de Babylone et de la Perse avaient détruit les fondations de l'ordre ancien. A l'époque de Noé Dieu a posé la fondation d'un ordre nouveau par Son alliance avec Noé et ses descendants (Gen 9.9, 18-19). au sixième siècle la nouvelle fondation posée par Dieu était Son alliance de paix avec ce qui restait d'Israël et ses descendants.

La belle cité de Dieu (vv.11-15) - Le prophète commence par une description des exilés israélites dans une pirogue "battue par la tempête" au milieu d'une mer agitée. Il leur montre une image de la cité du futur en contraste avec l'extrême insécurité dans laquelle ils vivaient. Cette cité serait construite de magnifiques pierres précieuses, elle serait verte comme une forêt, bleue comme le ciel et dorée comme le lever du soleil. Il est probable que l'auteur des descriptions de la Nouvelle Jérusalem dans Apocalypse 21.18-21 se soit inspiré de ce chapitre d'Ésaïe. Comme dans Apocalypse, cette cité serait aussi ouverte aux nations (Ap 21.24; 22.2).

La sécurité dans un monde violent (vv. 16-17a) - A la fin du poème le prophète se tourne à nouveau vers la situation réelle. La paix était détruite par les mauvaises langues et la violence. Les forgerons fabriquaient des armes de guerre. Toutefois, les serviteurs de Dieu avaient la promesse qu'aucune de ces

forces destructrices allait vaincre l'alliance de la paix de Dieu.

La réponse à l'espérance - En décrivant l'espérance des exilés israélites pour un nouveau peuple et un nouveau monde, le prophète cherche à leur donner de la force afin qu'ils puissent avancer vers l'avenir. Qu'ils chantent et se réjouissent au lieu de pleurer (v.1). Qu'au lieu de se replier sur eux-mêmes tâchant de sauver leurs vies, ils se tournent vers l'extérieur, qu'ils se préparent à accepter dans leur "tente" de nouveaux peuples et nations et qu'ils soient même prêts à modifier leurs propres traditions et modes de vie s'il le faut ("les toiles de tes demeures qu'on les distende!... Allonge tes cordages," v.2). Qu'au lieu d'oublier leur foi et leur identité, ils renouvellent leur engagement ("et tes piquets, fais-les tenir," v.2). Qu'au lieu de s'abandonner au désespoir et à la défaite, ils acceptent le pardon de Dieu et qu'ils répondent à Son appel d'amour (vv.6-8). Qu'au lieu de pleurer sur les ruines de l'ordre ancien, ils travaillent à la construction de la future cité de Dieu, par des actes de paix et de justice, et qu'ils combattent l'oppression, la terreur et l'hostilité.

Application, discussion, recherche

1. Comparez les idées relatives à l'espérance dans Esaïe 54 avec celles dans Pierre 1. Quelles sont les similarités, quelles sont les différences? Les deux textes sont-ils liés à l'idée du salut de l'Exode? Si oui, de quelle manière?
2. Parmi les cinq descriptions de l'Israël bouleversée que vous trouvez dans ce poème, laquelle correspondrait le mieux à une congrégation que vous connaissez?
3. Dans ce texte, quelle est l'image d'espérance qui s'applique le mieux aux églises du Pacifique alors qu'elles se tournent vers le prochain siècle?

*Unnamed
prostitute*

AND THE TEARS FELL

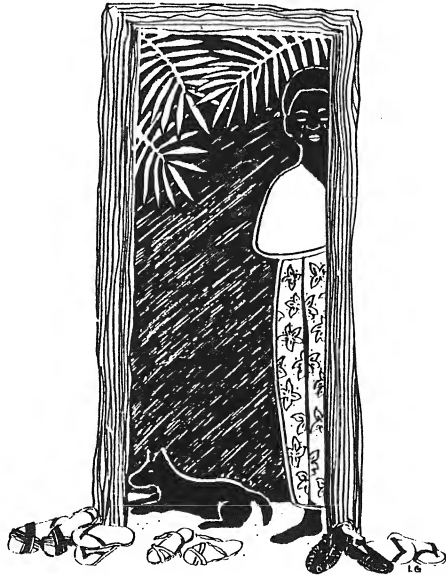
Meditation on Luke 7: 36-50

This poem arose out of the meditation on Luke 7: 36-50 by a group of women who meet in Suva on Tuesdays for Bible study and meditation.

It was written by Tessa Mackenzie, but it is ascribed 'T,' which stands for Tuesday as well as Tessa, to indicate that the inspiration for the poem arose from the joint contribution of those present on that Tuesday morning, 19th March, 1991.

I
Who am I?
What am I?
I am the anonymous one.
I am the gratification of their lust -
I am the comfort of their lonely loins -
I am anonymous
but everyone knows my name.
They spit it.
They whisper it.
Oh, I'm used to the hatred.
I can take it.
That's life,
for me -
What's in a name?
Who cares what they think?
Then I heard him -
I heard him speak -

And the rain fell
Deafeningly.



II

Who am I?
What am I?
I am the one at the edge of the crowd.
I'm used to the dark doorways,
the corners -
I'm used to being thrown out.
They don't want to see me -
I remind them.
They'd rather not see me -
Oh, I'm used to it,
being ignored in the daylight -
That's life.
Who cares?
I wait for the darkness.
Then I saw him.
And he saw me.

And the rain fell
Obliteratingly.

III

Who am I?
What am I?
Now I don't know
I'm confused.
I saw him.
He saw me.
His look is different....
Like, he values me...
But surely he knows?
He must know,
but his eyes call to me -
He speaks to the crowd,
but his words are for me.
He speaks of love....
Of love?
Don't make me laugh!
I know about love,
like I know about hate.
But this is a different love -
This is a saving love -
Saving love?
Who would save me?
And the rain fell
In torrents.

IV

Who is he?

What is he?

Where is he?

He's at the home of Simon the Pharisee.

Dare I go there?

Why not?

He's a man.

He called me,

with his eyes,

differently.

Is he the one I've waited for?

Is he the escape from all this?

Me, married to a Rabbi?

don't think about it!

Just go.

Go to him.

He called you.

And the rain fell
Heavily.

V

Who is he?

What is he?

They call him Sir.

He enters the house,

the house of Simon,

the Pharisee, leading citizen.

They're all there,

All the somebodies

They call him Sir,

like it sticks in their throats.

They treat him like a leper.

No proper greeting.

No water to wash.

No respect.

Don't they know?

Why have they invited him?

Why is he here?

They hate him -

They hate him too -

And the tears fell

Uncontrollably.

VI

Who is he?
 What is he?
 He is the hurt child
 He is the crushed flower.
 He is alone -
 Is there no one who cares?
 He needs someone
 to love him.
 My hair is down.
 My perfume fills the air.
 My arms are aching.
 My heart is bursting.
 Who am I?
 What am I?
 Where am I?
 What am I doing?
 Oh the shame!
 My love,
 I have gone too far!

And the tears fell
 Blindingly.

VII

Who am I?
 What am I?
 I am a curse.
 I am the despised one.
 Go on then.
 Kick me down.
 Push me away.
 Throw me out.
 I know what you're thinking
 all of you.
 But not him.
 Why is he still?
 Why is he quiet?
 Why does he let me..
 touch him?
 He knows!
 He accepts!

And the tears fell
 Tenderly.
 And the rain fell

Gently.

VIII
Who is he?
He who speaks?
Listen.
Hear his words.
They are for you -
They are for me -
Forgiveness -
Peace -
Go.

And after the rain
New life springs forth
From the earth.



T. 19/2/91

ET LES LARMES TOMBERENT

Méditation sur Luc 7.36-50

Ce poème est né de la méditation sur Luc 7.36-50 par un groupe de femmes qui se réunissent les mardis pour étudier la bible et méditer.

Il a été écrit par Tessa Mackenzie, mais il est signé 'T', qui signifie aussi bien Tuesday (mardi) que Tessa, pour indiquer que l'inspiration du poème est le produit de toutes les personnes présentes ce mardi matin, 19 mars, 1991.

I
Qui suis-je?
Que suis-je?
Je suis l'anonyme.
Je suis la satisfaction de leur désir -
Je suis le passe-temps de leur solitude -
Je suis anonyme
mais chacun connaît mon nom.
Ils le crachent.
Ils le murmurent.
Oh, je suis habituée à la haine.
Je sais la supporter.
C'est la vie,
pour moi -
Qu'y a-t-il dans un nom?
Qui se soucie de ce qu'ils pensent?
Puis je l'ai entendu -
Je l'ai entendu parler -
Et le pluie tomba
Assourdissante.

II

Qui suis-je?
Que suis-je?
Je suis celle-là, marginale à la foule.
J'ai l'habitude des entrées obscures,
des coins -
J'ai l'habitude d'être rejetée.
Ils ne veulent pas me voir -
Je leur rappelle.
Ils préféreraient ne pas me voir -
Oh, j'en ai l'habitude,
être ignorée en plein jour -
C'est la vie.
Qui se soucie?
J'attends la nuit.
Alors je l'ai vu.
Et il me vit.

Et la pluie tomba
Oblitérante.

III

Qui suis-je?
Que suis-je?
Je me sais plus
Je suis troublée.
Je l'ai vu.
Il m'a vue.
Il semble si différent...
Il semble m'estimer...
Pourtant il doit savoir?
Il sait,
mais ses yeux m'appellent -
Il parle à la foule,
mais ses paroles sont pour moi.
Il parle d'amour...
d'amour?
Ne me faites pas rire!
Je connais l'amour,
comme je connais la haine.
Mais cet amour est différent -
C'est un amour qui sauve -
Un amour sauveur?
Qui voudrait me sauver?
Et le pluie tomba
A torrents.

IV

Qui est-il?

Qu'est-il?

Où est-il?

Il est chez Simon le pharisien

Osé-je y aller?

Pourquoi pas?

C'est un homme.

Il m'a appelée,

avec ses yeux,

d'une façon différente.

Est-il celui que j'attendais?

Est-il évasion de tout ceci?

Moi, mariée avec un rabbin?

n'y pense pas!

Vas-y.

Va vers lui.

Il t'a appelée.

Et la pluie tomba

Lourdement.

V

Qui est il?

Qu'est-il?

Ils l'appellent Monsieur.

Il entre dans la maison,

la maison de Simon,

le pharisien, premier citoyen.

Ils sont tous là,

Tous les gens d'importance

Ils l'appellent Monsieur,

comme si cela leur piquait la gorge.

Ils le traitent comme un lépreux.

Pas d'accueil convenable.

Pas d'eau pour se laver.

Pas de respect.

Ne savent-ils pas?

Pourquoi l'ont-ils invité?

Pourquoi est-il ici?

Ils le haïssent -

Ils le haïssent lui aussi -

Et les larmes tombèrent
irrésistiblement.

VI

Qui est-il?
 Qu'est-il?
 Il est l'enfant blessé
 Il est la fleur écrasée.
 Il est seul -
 N'y a-t-il personne qui se soucie?
 Il a besoin de quelqu'un
 qui l'aime.
 Ma chevelure est répandue.
 Mon parfum remplit l'air.
 Mes bras me font mal.
 Mon coeur éclate.
 Qui suis-je?
 Que suis-je?
 Où suis-je?
 Qu'est-ce-que je fais?
 Oh honte!
 Mon amour,
 Je suis allée trop loin!
 Et les larmes tombèrent
 Aveuglément.

VII

Qui suis-je?
 Que suis-je?
 Je suis une malédiction.
 Je suis la mépriseé.
 Allez-y.
 Jetez-moi à terre.
 Chassez-moi.
 Jetez-moi dehors.
 Je sais ce que vous pensez
 vous tous.
 Mais pas lui.
 Pourquoi est-il tranquille?
 Pourquoi est-il calme?
 Pourquoi me laisse-t-il...
 le toucher?
 Il sait!
 Il accepte!
 Et les larmes tombèrent
 Tendrement.

Et la pluie tomba

Doucement.

VII

Qui est-il?

Celui qui parle?

Ecoutez.

Entendez ses paroles.

Elles sont pour vous -

Elles sont pour moi.

Pardon.

Paix.

Allez.

Et après la pluie
Une vie nouvelle jaillit
De la terre.



T. 19/2/91

DIMENSIONS OF LEARNING

In his address to the 1990 graduating class of Pacific Regional Seminary, Michael O'Connor challenges the outgoing students to 'continue to learn' once they have left seminary and are engaged in ministry. He then elaborates what is entailed in the three dimensions of ongoing learning - pastoral, professional and personal. His exhortation is an apt one not only for all Pacific seminarians but for pastors, priests and others in church vocations.

1990 Graduation Address at Pacific Regional Seminary Michael O'Connor



Michael O'Connor

This evening in a particular way I want to address you, the PRS class of 1990, for today you are graduating from Pacific Regional Seminary. From this moment on, your life will be different to what it has been for the last seven or eight years. You are no longer students. You have completed your studies and you trust that soon you will be called to the ministries of diaconate and priesthood in your various dioceses and religious congregations. As I prepared for this evening and asked myself what message I should give to

you, two images came strongly to mind. The first is an image of a variety of people speaking about the graduates of PRS and saying: 'Very few of the graduates continue to read.' I feel that is a great pity. The second image comes from the last course in my study of chemistry in Christchurch (now many years ago). The professor concluded his course with the statement, 'You have finished your programme. You are now qualified to begin to learn.' *'Qualified to begin to learn!'* It was a shock! After four years of hard work in a top programme where I thought I had learnt so much - to be then told: 'You are now ready to begin to learn.' But he was right. Tonight I want to repeat that message to you, the graduates of PRS: 'You have completed your studies here and you

are now qualified to begin to learn.'

I do not mean by this statement that you have not studied hard and learnt much at this seminary. On the contrary. It has been a long course of study - some eight years - in which you have covered some 80 courses, done a research project (thesis/synthesis), had a full year of practical pastoral training, and been helped in your own spiritual formation through workshops, retreats, conferences and through studies themselves. Other professionals do longer and tougher courses than this; but it *has* been hard work and it *was* a long course. (You deserve our congratulations.) Yet in spite of all that, I still insist: Now, you are *qualified to begin to learn*.

It seems that there are at least three different dimensions where this learning needs to take place. I name them as pastoral learning, as continuing professional learning, and as personal learning. Let me explore each of these in turn.

Pastoral Learning

Today you qualify to begin to learn how to be a pastor, a shepherd to God's people, and this will be a life-long learning. The academic subjects you have covered must now become *more fully operative* in your ministry and pastoral work. The theology you have studied must now be *lived* in the way you minister and build up the church. The scripture studies must *enliven your preaching* as well as your prayers for your people. Your studies in moral theology must be applied to the concrete situations in which people and society find themselves. The various other studies - anthropology, philosophy, psychology, pastoral, Canon law, etc. - will in the various ways assist and guide you in those tasks. The task before you is to learn how to put these studies of theory into practice in your pastoral work. You have had some pastoral training, a full year of pastoral experience, and all your courses are in principle taught with a pastoral orientation. But there still remains a gap between the theory you have imbibed here and its application to the pastoral situations where you will be working.

I do not want to imply that I agree with *those pastors one meets* who will speak to you of: 'the theory you learnt in the seminary that will not work in the real world.' But I do acknowledge that today all professions are asking questions about and searching for new ways of bridging the gap between professional training and the real life situation in which the professionals will work. One approach has been to take a more problem-centred approach, where much of the learning is generated by working with particular case studies. The Fiji School

of Medicine has recently announced that it will move in this direction. While not necessarily being the complete answer for theological education, it does suggest that case studies and problem-solving approaches are important approaches for our seminary training.

Another approach to bridging the gap between professional training and practice - in our case between seminary and the pastoral practice - is implied in the theory of Donald Schon. Schon points out that many professionals (in our case priests) know much more than they can put into words. Schon claims that this has come about because they have not kept on questioning, reflecting on and learning from their experiences. Training, he says, should concentrate on developing people who are reflective practitioners. I believe that this says something important for seminary training; but it also says to you who are graduating that reflecting on, questioning, discussing with others your own experience is one of the most important learning situations for you for the future.

Schon actually has a nice phrase about learning the practice. Training, he would claim, produces an understanding of the *science* of theology. What needs to be learnt is the *artistry* of applying what you have learnt to a particular human person; to a community in a particular life situation. Artistry is a good word. It suggests a delicacy of touch, a skill of perception, a gentleness, an attentiveness and a reflectiveness which are vitally important pastoral attributes for learning. To be avoided is the approach that says 'I know the answer. I have seen this before.' No one knows all the answers and every case is different - that is why artistry is such a good word. So one of your major tasks is to learn *the art* of pastoral care.

Professional Learning

The second dimension where I believe learning needs to continue is in your own professional (that is, theological) learning. In spite of all the courses you have done, there are many areas of theology that you have never studied. In all areas, your learning should be deepened. There are many pastoral questions to which you will have to discern the answers - from when children are to be baptised and confirmed; to the model of ministry of the catechists in the local village community; to keeping the Gospel message before your people in volatile political situations. There is much to be learnt there. Reading, reflection and study are needed and each of us should continue to keep abreast of current national and world events.



Graduates need to keep reading if they are to become good ministers.

It is natural enough at this moment, after the years of study, to feel like leaving aside all books forever. I hope any such comments will simply be said as a joke. I have heard various reasons why priests do not continue to read. Some claim that they are so involved in their pastoral ministry that they have no time to read. Yet research in other professions shows that those people who are most dedicated to the people they are serving are those who are most likely to continue with their professional education. If one is truly committed to God's people, continuing to read and to learn will be one of your priorities.

Another explanation put forward is that in the Pacific there is no tradition of reading. The Pacific way, it is asserted, is one that does not involve study. People say: 'Our traditions are oral traditions, handed down by word of mouth and by story. Oral history will tell us what has happened in the past, and will pass on the traditions that are the heart of our culture and of a stable traditional society.' But, as someone told me recently, 'When my outboard motor is not working I go to the manual rather than my culture!' Tradition must be remembered, values must be retained, but the past is *inadequate to deal completely with the modern world and technology*. As modern Pacifican priests, dealing with a well educated laity, living in a rapidly changing world, you are challenged and called to be men who read, study and listen to the people and the society around you.

There is one further reason why we need to continue to study our theology and our cultures. That reason lies in the challenge of inculturation, the responsibility for which lies particularly in your hands. Paul VI issued the call for inculturation most strongly. In *Evangelii Nuntiandi* (No. 63) he stated that the church is incarnate in individual churches, and he called on each church to:

... assimilate the essence of the Gospel message,

and to transpose it,

... without the slightest betrayal of its essential truth,

into the new cultural setting.

He went on to speak of the need for 'discernment, seriousness, respect and competence' in order to do this properly.

Not all the inculturation that has been done is necessarily the best expression, and much more remains to be done. This task of inculturation will continue to need study and care so that it will be done without distorting the Gospel message. Here is one further reason for you to continue to learn and deepen your understanding of the Gospel message.

Personal Learning

The third dimension I named was that of personal learning. We all grow and change as persons. Life challenges all of us in a variety of ways. Growing older, losing our first enthusiasm, suffering failures of various kinds, becoming disheartened by the poor responses to our pastoral efforts will provide us with opportunity and challenge to learn more about ourselves. Adult developmental psychologists speak of the need to continue to discern *the new meanings* in our lives, which implies humbly reflecting on and regularly evaluating our values and our lives. Canadian theologian Bernard Lonergan speaks of personal development as a matter of self-creation - which comes about when we pause to reflect on our experience, to judge the value of what we are doing, and to decide on new ways of acting. As our lives unfold, we are challenged to learn more about ourselves and what God has called us to be.

I have spent much time pointing to the need for continuing to learn throughout the whole of your lives as priests. One small question remains: Who will teach

you? How will you learn? Let me give a few pointers without attempting to answer the question completely.

We learn if we are humble - not necessarily a strong virtue among us priests, but one we must strive to develop. If we are humble we will be aware of *what we do not know* and how much more there is to learn.

If we are humble we will be able to ask questions of our fellow pastoral workers and others who may have insights. We will not think that we have (or even can have) all the answers ourselves. A great weakness we have as priests is that we are notoriously poor at asking for help, sharing about our work or about our lives.

If we are humble we will be very attentive to the people to whom we minister. There are huge stores of wisdom and learning in the experience of people. There are people with little formal education who have a *more profound understanding* of theology than anything we ever heard in our books of theology.

It is most important that we daily read, reflect upon and pray over God's word. In particular, the great encouragement to learning must be your Sunday (and weekday) homilies. To read in depth the passage of scripture, to see how it applies to this community of faith gathered here on this Sunday, requires study of the texts, reflection on the life of the community and prayer for guidance. It is a key way for all of us to keep up our learning.

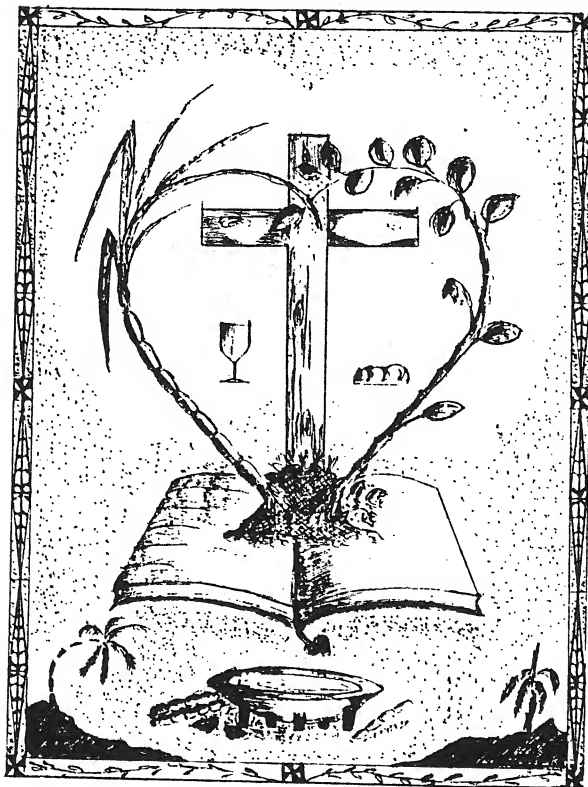
Lastly, I think there is something in all this about living a life that is reflective. Experience without reflection teaches us nothing. Many times this evening I have used the word *reflection*. I believe we must seek to live lives that are reflective - about our experience, our lives, our society and our world.

I began my talk this evening by stating that, as people about to graduate, you are now qualified to begin to learn. I have sought to point out some areas in which you are called to continue to grow in learning if you are to be real ministers to God's people in the various dioceses in which you will work here in the Pacific. Tonight I congratulate you on what you have done, what you have achieved during your years here at Pacific Regional Seminary. Much more will be asked of you in the years to come. Continue to learn. Continue to ask questions. Continue to reflect. Continue to ask God for that deeper understanding of God's way which comes to those who are prepared to be open to deeper understanding and learning.

TONGAN CULTURE AND CHRISTIAN FAITH

An Artist's Impression

Nasili Vaka'uta



The purpose of the drawing is to show the compatability of the Christian faith and the Tongan culture.

The background of the picture shows the Cross of Christ and the two elements of the Eucharist. The two plants, in the foreground, are sugar cane and kava.

According to the Tongan tradition, these plants were originally grown out of a girl's grave at 'Eueiki Island (north east of Tongatapu).

It was long again that the *Tuitonga* (King) sailed with his men around the islands on their *Kalia* (old Tongan warship). Reaching the island of 'Eueiki, they were exhausted and hungry, so they decided to stop at the island, looking for some food.

There was only one family living on the island. The parents were Fevanga and Fefafa, and they had one daughter, named Kava. Their only crop at the island was a big taro plant (*Kape*). When the parents knew that their king (*Tuitonga*) and his men were on the island, they decided to cook their only crop (the taro) for them, as a sign of their respect, love and loyalty. Unfortunately, they found out that the King was leaning on the taro. Being unable to cook the taro, they cooked their only daughter, Kava, in an '*umu* (underground oven).

Later, the King heard of what the parents were doing and told them not to open up the '*umu* again. A few weeks passed and there were two plants found to be growing out of the grave. They named the one on the head, *kava*, (following their daughter's name) and the one on the feet, *tō* (sugar cane). From that day, these two plants must be presented in every great Tongan festival and feast, as a reminder of the people's respect, love, and loyalty to their king.

Thus, whenever anyone drinks the *kava* and eats the *tō*, it reminds them of the sacrificial love expressed at 'Eueiki Island.

Similarly, the Cross reminds every Christian of the sacrificial love of God for humans in the death of His only begotten son, Jesus Christ. The two elements of the Eucharist, bread and wine, remind Christians of that sacrificial love.

The *kava* bowl (*kumate*) and the sugar cane branch at the bottom of the picture represent the two elements of the Eucharist most relevant for Tongan Christians. The two plants (*kava* and sugar cane) growing out of the Bible represent the Cross of Christ. The heart that the two plants form represents the spirit of love behind the act of giving (which is the true Tongan spirit). Their being rooted together with the Cross shows the unity of culture and faith.

To the Tongans, seeing the *kava* and the *tō* (sugar cane) is like seeing the Cross of Christ. And having them is like having the two elements of the Eucharist. They symbolise that sacrificial love which brings life to everyone - the life that Christ has offered abundantly.

CHRISTIAN RESPONSES TO THE 1990 FIJI CONSTITUTION

From time to time churches or councils of churches make statements relating to national concerns. In our first issue of the Journal we included public statements made by Church leaders and the Fiji Council of Churches in post-coup Fiji.

In this issue we include two statements relating to two different constitutional proposals.

The first statement was issued as a response to the invitation to make submissions to the Constitution Review Committee set up by the then Governor General, Ratu Sir Penaia Ganilau, on June 11th 1987. The official Roman Catholic Church submission in the name of Archbishop Petero Mataka articulated basic Christian principles to be kept in mind in revising the Constitution of Fiji.

The second statement was made in response to the draft of the Fiji Constitution of the Republic of Fiji prepared by the Fiji Constitution Inquiry and Advisory Committee set up by the Interim Government in 1988. The Fiji Council of Churches set up a task force to study the proposals with care and give a carefully thought-through response. The statement was submitted to the Committee on 21st December, 1988.

The letter covering this submission states that 'we consider it our role to put forward sound Christian teaching in the hope that it will help form the conscience of and guide those whose role it is to make political decisions.'

In this instance a new Fiji Constitution was promulgated in 1990 which did not take into account the concerns for racial equality expressed in the two submissions we include here. Nonetheless, the Editor recognises the importance of including such important Church statements in the Journal and invites Pacific Churches and Councils to send similar statements for publication.

A SUBMISSION TO THE CONSTITUTIONAL REVIEW COMMITTEE

Archbishop Petero Mataka
24/7/87

The Roman Catholic Church (RCC) seeks a just, comprehensive and lasting peace in our beloved nation, Fiji. The attainment of such peace remains an urgent necessity.

The RCC does not believe that complex problems, like the unique one we have here, can be solved easily with simple good will. They require a *supreme measure* of good will and a lot of thinking - not physical, cultural and economic destruction and confrontation. What is needed also is the intelligent and imaginative creation of new patterns of common life, cooperation and cultural communication among all races.

The RCC believes that the essential elements of any settlement in Fiji have to be the unequivocal acceptance of Fiji's right, as a nation and as a people, to exist in peace and security, and the resolution of our social, economic and political problems on that basis.

The RCC declares its firm belief that all persons are loved and treasured by God, our common Father, and should therefore act towards each other in a spirit of true brotherly love.

Each human person has his/her dignity, rights and obligations. This dignity must be accepted and respected and a situation must be created where every person and group can exercise their rights and obligations freely and in peace.

Since antiquity, human migration and the international movement of peoples have been a recurrent phenomenon. Indeed, the phenomenon of migration is as old as humanity itself. Perhaps we should see in it a sign:

- i) That the land is an economic resource attracting people in need of economic security, and thereby giving rise to new chapters in human history.

- ii) That migration represents the moment of a most radical transformation of any historical person or group. It is the decisive moment when they gain new opportunity, new living space and the confidence of being-at-home. At this moment the migrants become mature inheritors (citizens). As people, they become a new creation.
- iii) That our life in this world is a journey towards our eternal home. Our Fathers in the faith acknowledged 'that they were strangers and pilgrims in this world.' (Heb. 11: 3)

The ancestors of the indigenous people of Fiji migrated to this land many centuries ago. A religious, social, cultural and linguistic heritage has developed which is unique to these islands and must be treasured. Other races have come to Fiji in more recent times. The *Vasu* too are a reality in our multiracial society; they are a recognised group. These races and the *Vasu* group also have a valuable religious, social, cultural and linguistic heritage that must be treasured.

All these races and groups have contributed to what Fiji is today. All are firmly a part of Fiji. We acknowledge the many differences that exist among us, but, as the RCC has said before, these can be and should be a source of richness and strength, not of envy and antagonism. Our different cultures, life-styles, levels of income and ownership do not mask the fact that we are all equally human beings, children of God. Rather, they create a diversity and complementarity which should be harnessed for the welfare of all.

As human beings, brothers and sisters in God's family, we must treat each other with full respect. We regard it therefore as not merely unchristian but repugnant to basic humanity that any sector of our society should be excluded from or treated with notable disproportion in political representation. No matter how we come to be in Fiji, or how long we have been here (within reasonable limits established by law), we are all part of this land. It is the land of our birth or the land of our adoption, the land to which we belong. And in the last analysis the ultimate ownership of any land belongs to God. Our responsibility is the wise use of land for the good of all, thereby giving glory to God, the giver of all land.

In the spirit of Christian brotherhood and in the long-term interest of Fiji, we advocate that all the people of Fiji should have equal right to take part in the government of this country either themselves or through representatives, who

for the most part should be freely elected. As far as reasonably possible, all should have equal voting rights, equal representation, and equal access to public service and government positions.

Although political details are not our prime concern or particular area of expertise, the RCC thinks it desirable at this time to point out that the political system employed to date has tended to emphasise and highlight racial differences and perhaps create unproductive racial division.

We would support the search for a just and lasting peace through creating a government which is radically committed to searching for new solutions to national issues without ideological prior 'solutions.' Ideology often simply states organised thinking that expresses common prejudices or bias in intellectual or social form.

We would support the gradual growth of a common roll in which the people are asked to elect candidates with such a creative and open approach. This would better serve the cause of national unity and peace than what we have had. In such a common roll system the racial factor would be important only insofar as and as long as the people of Fiji attached such importance to it.

We would question whether the two-party system as operated is conducive to mutual trust. Too readily the system in practice degenerates into one party



governing and the other opposing for the sake of destructive rather than constructive criticism. This in Fiji easily translates into basically one major race governing and the other opposing. We believe sincere and concrete efforts should be made so that all the elected representatives would be involved in a more constructive and unified way in the governing of our country. Perhaps this could be done by having cabinet itself representative of the various parties or interests, and by requiring that all representatives in parliament be truly free. This would mean freedom to vote according to what they see as in the country's best interests rather than being under considerable constraint to vote according to party lines.

In relation to problems regarding land, we have been unable to determine what is regarded as genuinely defective in the existing Constitution of 1970. Nevertheless, if further guarantees are required in this or other matters, we would not be opposed in principle provided others' rights are not impinged. We would advise, however, against over-guarding people's rights. As time moves on, such over-legislation could create an inflexibility that would retard the progress of those very people whom the legislation is now trying to protect. Here history is a good teacher. It teaches us that a guaranteed security can dull the memory and dull initiative. A guaranteed situation can erode the capacity to adapt from how it was and how it is to how it might yet be.

Finally, in working towards a solution, we would strongly urge that all people be truly free to submit their opinions and discuss whatever changes are to be made in the structure and practice of government in Fiji. While there is legitimate haste to return to a more normal situation, such haste should not deprive people of the right to be heard. Nor should it rush us into a solution which, through lack of due thought, is only superficial. This would leave a festering wound underneath which could generate further difficulties later in our history.

May God, the Father of us all, guide us towards true brotherhood in working together to build a just, peaceful and unified Fiji.

FIJI COUNCIL OF CHURCHES' STATEMENT ON THE PROPOSED NEW FIJI CONSTITUTION - 19/12/88

Introduction

We, the Fiji Council of Churches, consider it part of our Christian mission and responsibility to affirm certain basic Christian values - love of neighbour, justice, peace, equality, sharing, respect for the truth - and to see that they are upheld in all institutions designed to promote the welfare of the people of Fiji, and to establish and maintain public order. It is in this spirit that we make the following submission concerning the draft Constitution for the State of Fiji.

Basic Principles

Certain basic principles are recognised by all the major religious traditions in Fiji as well as in all major international instruments for the promotion and protection of human rights. We propose that the following principles form the basis for all the provisions of the Constitution:

1. dignity of the human person and the rights of everyone to be treated with equal respect;
2. fair treatment for everyone irrespective of race, religion, sex, age, status;
3. mutual recognition of and respect by all ethnic groups for one another's religio-cultural traditions;
4. respect for the values and traditions of the indigenous people;
5. supremacy of the moral law - 'right over might' - and the settlement of conflicts by non-violent means;
6. the responsibility of political authority to serve the common good;
7. special consideration for the needs of the poor and disadvantaged, of whatever ethnic, religious or other social background;
8. an equitable representation of all social groups in the institutions of public life;

9. maximum participation of all citizens in decision-making processes for determining their own destiny and the development of the nation;
10. equitable distribution of the nation's wealth, with a view to ensuring a full, productive life for all;
11. responsible stewardship of the God-given resources of the natural environment.

Key Elements of the Present Situation

In striving to find solutions to the present difficulties facing Fiji, and mindful of the above principles, we note the following;

1. There is a real and potential groundswell of goodwill existing among all social groups, and a long tradition of general respect for law. These we see as invaluable assets that should be used to bring about a just and lasting solution to Fiji's problems, in accordance with the Pacific way of resolving differences through dialogue and a search for true consensus.
2. The racial and religious diversity in Fiji are gifts which can be used to build a rich national identity. It is therefore of deep concern to us that they are used instead to divide people at this critical time when unity is of paramount importance.
3. Freedom of expression, exercised within the normal bounds of the law and as enshrined in international human rights covenants, has been a valued feature of Fiji society. This should be maintained at all costs, and all efforts to repress it vigorously rejected.
4. The general climate of freedom of expression which has been characteristic of Fiji has included a public confidence in the freedom of the media. It is with deep concern, therefore, that we note attempts to control the media through intimidation and other means, and the abuse of the media to promote selective viewpoints.
5. Fijian culture has been a source of strength and identity for all the peoples of Fiji. We are aware, however, that cultural traditions, if viewed in a static way, can easily become a burden to people instead of promoting their human well-being.

6. We recognise the potential of the traditional leaders of the Fijian and other communities, as well as of new forms of leadership which have emerged and been accepted in more recent history, to serve the common good. We believe, however, that this good can only be served if all these forms of leadership work in interrelationship.
7. While Fiji has long been regarded as a society of open and harmonious relationships among diverse social groups, one of the major threats to our society at this difficult time is the fear, suspicion and prejudice that is being promoted by a few people.
8. We recognise that the tension between the rights and concerns of indigenous people and the rights and concerns of other religio-cultural groups (Principles 4 and 3 above) has both dangers and creative possibilities for the long term future of Fiji. One danger is to pretend that the tension does not exist. Another is to remove the tension by having one principle over-ride the other. It is essential that ways be found to deal with this tension creatively by means, for example, of a National Covenant.
9. Since deep divisions have, however, surfaced in the context of the current time of crisis, we recognise that healing and reconciliation are necessary. More time must therefore be given to the people to exchange and discuss their views, fears and hopes and create a shared vision for the country, so that these divisions do not become the basis on which its future is established.
10. Fiji is a country blessed with rich resources, which have for centuries been a source of both spiritual and physical well-being for its inhabitants, and which are sufficient to meet the needs of its whole population. We note with alarm, however, the growing concentration of power and wealth in the hands of fewer and fewer people. The resulting growth in extremes of wealth and poverty in our society, irrespective of race, engenders a sense of frustration and hopelessness in large sections of the community. In the long run, such disparities will pose a more serious threat to Fiji than the racial disharmony we are so conscious of at present.

Comments on the Draft Constitution

1. Although there are elements of a **vision** for the country in the Preamble, we believe that it is crucial for the Preamble to include a clear statement

of a shared national vision with which all social groups can identify. The discovery of such a shared national vision is an essential part of the process of forming a constitution. "Without a vision the people perish" (Prov. 29: 18). It is also essential that the details of the constitution are consistent with that vision.

2. The Preamble to the draft Constitution contains seven (7) statements which claim to express the views and wishes of the people of Fiji. We question the validity of such claims, on the basis that no referendum or other survey has been carried out to ascertain these views and wishes.
3. We uphold the principle of the separation of church and state 'under God.' While acknowledging the place and contribution of Christianity in Fiji's history, we also recognise the dangers of giving one religious tradition a special position in the constitution.

We, therefore, suggest the following statement as clause 3 in the Preamble:

And whereas they acknowledge the contribution that Christianity has made to Fiji and its peoples, and recognise the God-given principles of love of neighbour, justice, peace, equality, sharing and respect for truth;

And whereas they re-affirm the importance and place of the family...
(new clause four in Draft Preamble).

We also suggest that chapter 1:1 should read as follows:

Fiji shall be a sovereign Republic which acknowledges God as the source of all that is good and true and just.

4. We are concerned at the concentration of power, as advocated in the draft, in the hands of:
 - the President
 - the *Bose Levu Vaka Turaga* (the Great Council of Chiefs)

In order to fulfill its essential purpose, power must go hand in hand with accountability. We therefore consider it essential that a system of checks

and balances be built into the Constitution to put limits on the absolute exercise of power by the Executive.

5. We are concerned about the inadequate safeguards against corruption. We see the need for:
 - a leadership code of conduct for all public figures and senior officers of government and
 - a strengthening of the role of the Ombudsman, additional to that which is proposed in the draft.
6. We note the importance of the principle of the separation of legislative, executive and judicial functions, especially with a view to maintaining an independent judiciary. In the draft, this distinction has been blurred in favour of the power of the Executive.
7. While there is a need to respect and uphold Fijian and Rotuman cultures and traditions, there is a parallel need to ensure respect for the cultures and traditions of other communities in Fiji. (cf. Draft, Chapter 3)
8. Where positive discrimination is attempted, such as in the provision of educational opportunities, this should be based on the principle of real disadvantage or lack of resources, irrespective of race or other affiliation.
9. Discrimination against women in relation to access to citizenship of the spouses of women citizens should be removed, as well as the general use of sexist language (references to "men", "brethren", etc.). (cf. Draft, Preamble and Chapter 4).
10. The Military must always be under civilian control. The Military is the servant and not the master of the people.
11. The grievances which led to the upheaval of the coup cannot be resolved by the simple process of allocating the majority seats in Parliament to one race. (cf. Draft, Chapter 6, part 2).

We therefore strongly recommend:

- a) that alternative ways of addressing these grievances be explored and

b) that alternative models of allocating Parliamentary seats be studied and evaluated, so that all social groups are represented fairly.

Signed on behalf of the Fiji Council of Churches by:

Reverend Josateki Koroi

President, Methodist Church of Fiji

Most Reverend Petero Mataca

Roman Catholic Archbishop of Suva

Right Reverend Jabez Bryce

Anglican Bishop of Polynesia

Major Lance Rive

Regional Superintendent of the Salvation Army

Reverend Doctor Bruce J. Deverell

St Andrew's Presbyterian Church

Reverend Alosina Vavae

Congregational Christian Church

Mr Henry A. Manueli

President, Fiji Council of Churches

Very Reverend Gerald McNicholas

Secretary, Fiji Council of Churches

PACIFIC THEOLOGICAL RESEARCH

The Journal is an excellent medium for disseminating to the Pacific and beyond information about recent and current research in the theological disciplines. In this issue Hans-Reudi Weber describes the six theses of Master of Theology students in Biblical studies completed in 1990 at Pacific Theological College. Kerry Prendeville then summarises the work-in-progress of the final projects of Pacific Regional Seminary's 1991 Bachelor of Divinity graduates.

It is our hope that this kind of sharing of the latest in theological research in the Pacific will continue to be regular feature of the Journal, and we invite summaries of such work not only from theological schools but from others as well. The theses and projects abstracted in this issue can be requested by writing to the libraries at Pacific Theological College and Pacific Regional Seminary respectively (addresses at back of Journal).

SIX MASTER'S THESES IN BIBLICAL STUDIES FROM THE PACIFIC THEOLOGICAL COLLEGE

Hans-Reudi Weber



Hans-Reudi Weber

Early in 1989 the Pacific Theological College (PTC) started a two-year Master of Theology (M.Th.) programme in Biblical Studies. It offers further training to Old and New Testament lecturers in local theological colleges, to persons involved in Biblical lay training programmes, and to Biblical theologians, equipping them for Bible translation. In 1990 at the end of this first Biblical M.Th. programme the following theses were presented.

RECONCILIATION: A Samoan Ritual Seen in the Light of Paul's and Luke's Message on Reconciliation. Pisopa Hakai, New Testament lecturer at Piula Theological College, Western Samoa.

On the basis of rare written sources and many interviews with old Samoan chiefs and pastors, the author first examines the origins and the present function of the Samoan *Ifoga* ritual of reconciliation in which fine mats play an important role. The second chapter deals with Paul's terminology and teaching on reconciliation, concentrating on I Corinthians 5: 18-21; Romans 5: 10-11; Ephesians 2: 16 f., and Colossians 1: 19-22.

In the third chapter the author looks at the different ways in which Paul and Luke do theology, and then examines some of Luke's stories of reconciliation, describing the table-fellowship of Jesus with outcasts, his forgiveness of sins and his attitude to Gentiles and Samaritans.

In the conclusion similarities and differences between the Samoan and Biblical understandings of reconciliation are analysed and proposals are made concerning how the *Ifoga* ritual and the use of the fine mats can enrich Samoan theological thinking and Christian worship.

A RHETORICAL ANALYSIS OF GENESIS 1 - 3. Falematapule Lomu, Old Testament lecturer at Sia'atoutai Theological College, Tonga.

The author describes first the origin and development of rhetorical analysis in Biblical research. With this approach readers enter directly into dialogue with the Biblical text as it is written, discovering the poetry and truth of the text without first searching for earlier oral and literary sources and the presumed historical setting. As Tongans respond directly to the observed beauty of creation through poetry, dance and tapa designs, so the Biblical authors have responded in awe to the work of the Creator with their artful composition and poetry of texts. In a second chapter the methods of rhetorical analysis are explained and the third chapter applies them to the reading and understanding of Genesis 1 - 3. In the fourth chapter the author discusses three main themes of this text; namely the word-act-creation sequence, the creation and vocation of human beings, and the different names of God. The conclusions show how a rhetorical analysis of the beginning of the Bible can help Christians in Tonga today to live as persons created in God's image. The author emphasises especially the importance of the day of rest.

DIVINE PRESENCE IN MOTU SOCIETY AND IN LUKE/ACTS. Kore Mavara, recently appointed New Testament lecturer at the Rarongo Theological College, Papua New Guinea.

On the basis of published studies and a series of taped interviews with knowledgeable elders among the Motu people of Papua new Guinea, the author describes in the first part general Melanesian understandings of divine presence. He then concentrates on the traditional Motu concept of *Irutahuna* - that is, the holy place where ancestor spirits and nature spirits are thought to be present. He also shows how *Dubu*, the platforms for the chiefs, relate to *Irutahuna*.

In the second part, Christ's presence in holy meals is examined: first, the presence of the earthly Jesus in the institution of the Lord's supper (Luke 22: 14-23); then, the presence of the risen Christ among the disciples of Emmaus (Luke 24: 28-35); and, thirdly, his presence through the Holy Spirit (Acts 2: 42, 46 f.). For each of these texts the present *Motu* translation is examined in the light of the original Greek text and proposals for a revised translation are made.

The conclusions show how the notion of 'Christ in culture' prepared the *Motu* for the coming of the Gospel through the notion of the *Irutahuna*; how the 'Christ above culture' judges old ways of *Motu* thinking; and how 'Christ, the transformer of culture' renews both old *Motu* concepts and imported Christian models of awareness of divine presence.

JONAH: AN INVITATION TO DIALOGUE. Eugenia Nicole, former Associate Pastor of St Andrews Church in Suva and active participant in Suva's Interfaith Search.

Taking her starting point from the concrete experience of dialogue amongst Hindus, Muslims, Christians and other religious traditions after the military coups in Fiji, the author first describes all the diverse dialogues taking place in the Book of Jonah. In a second part she then analyses the shifts of names for God which have long puzzled exegetes of the story of Jonah. What is the relationship between the *Lord* (the covenant God of the people of Israel), the God or the gods of the non-Jewish sailors and the Ninevites, and the vain idols mentioned in Jonah's psalm?

In the third part, the author describes various ways in which the Book of Jonah has been approached and understood. Is this story a report of historic facts? Is

it not rather a satire, a humorous story, a parable? What can we learn from a trans-cultural approach and from the way the artists have portrayed the story? In what way is Jonah a prophet, and what is his main message? At the end of all three parts the author shows implications of the Jonah story for inter-faith dialogue today.

JESUS AND POLITICAL AUTHORITIES: Mark's Teaching for Kiribati Christians' Involvement in Politics. Neemia Tangaroa, New Testament Lecturer at Tangintebu Theological College, Kiribati.

According to the author, only a few Christians in Kiribati realise that the Christian faith has implications for their involvement in politics. For this reason he examines what we can learn from 'Jesus' politics.' The first chapter describes the political climate in the first century A.D., the world of Jesus and Mark's own time and context.

In the next three chapters an exegesis is made of three Markan key passages: Jesus confronting conflict (Mark 10: 42-45), Jesus and violence (Mark 11: 15-17), and Jesus and the tax money (Mark 12: 13-17). The author critically examines the present Kiribati translation of these texts and draws conclusions relevant to Kiribati today. The fifth chapter is devoted to a review of 'Jesus' Politics' under the headings: Conflict with Satan and self-appointed rulers; The call to conversion; The priority of love; Christians and politics in Kiribati today.

PROBLEMS OF UNTRANSLATABLE METAPHORS IN THE KANAKY BIBLES. Pothin Wete, recently appointed Teaching Fellow in Old Testament at the Pacific Theological College, Fiji.

The first part of the thesis is devoted to a survey of translations of God's name in the Pacific region, especially in the Loyalty Islands (Ouvea, Lifou, Mare). In the second part the author examines the meaning of the metaphors of the shepherd and the sheep (Ezekiel 34: 1-25) and of the vineyard and the vine (Isaiah 5: 1-7). Both of these metaphors are incomprehensible to people in the Loyalty Islands; translators have simply used transliterations to render them from foreign languages. The author translates and paraphrases these texts by using the Kanaky understandings of *me'rico* (the traditional Kanaky hut) for the shepherd and the sheep metaphor, and the significance of the yam for the vineyard metaphor.

A long Appendix retraces the history of Bible translations and revisions in the Loyalty Islands.

1991 BACHELOR OF DIVINITY PROJECTS AT PACIFIC REGIONAL SEMINARY

Kerry Prendeville

The following are the summary outlines of the research projects currently being undertaken by the senior students (year seven) at Pacific Regional Seminary.

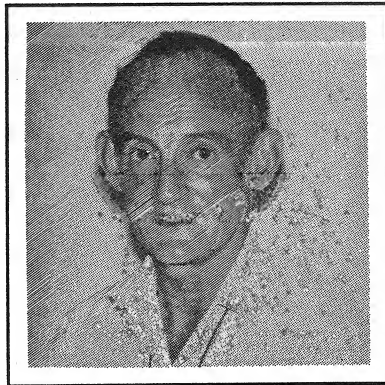
Laity and Evangelisation in Fiji, Ioane Manasa. This research project examines the role of laity as evangelisers in Fiji. It is written in Fijian.

Chapter 1 : This deals mainly with the past and present context of the Catholic Church in Fiji and outlines the ways in which the local Church is moving into a new understanding of itself and the role of the laity.

Chapter 2 : Looks at the wider historical background - the beginnings of the Church in Fiji and the role of the laity at that time, their relationships with the missionaries, how much they participated in evangelisation, why there was such an emphasis on the hierarchical model of the Church, keeping in mind the racial barriers, communication difficulties and cultural differences in Fiji at that time.

Chapter 3 : This engages in a theological reflection on the laity and their mission in the local Church. A few years ago the laity were seen in a very different perspective compared to ordained priests. Now the ministries of the whole people of God, including the ministry of those ordained to the priesthood, share in the work of Christ as priests, prophets and kings. As such, the laity have a duty to be active in the task of bringing Christ to the world today.

Chapter 4 : Looks at the pastoral implications of the mission of laity in the local Church, and the pastoral programmes and activities directed towards the realisation of the vision of the local Church in Fiji.



Kerry Prendeville

Chapter 5 : Explores how people as Church deepen their commitment to the realisation of the Kingdom of God in society and exercise a prophetic role:

- a) by promotion through words and deeds; and
- b) by living out the social teaching of the Church.

Tensions Between the Church and State in Tonga Today, Kulitapa Tangatailoa. The researcher examines the rights of the Church to speak up against injustices in Tongan society and government. In particular he looks at the alleged misuse of power and authority - particularly among the nobles and ministers of state. The writer conducted a written survey/questionnaire among a wide range of Tongans, both at home and overseas. The research project is written in Tongan.

Chapter 1 : Examines the petition from the Tonga National Council of Churches concerning the over-allowances paid to ministers and the misuse of their invested power; the response of parliament to this petition; and the reaction of the people to the petition.

Chapter 2 : This deals with an analysis of the historical background to the tensions between Church and State in Tonga: the social context and structure of Tongan society, the power and authority within society.

Chapter 3 : An overview of the prophetic roles of the Church: looking from the scriptural background of what a prophet was to the prophetic role of Jesus and how he challenged the unjust structures of his time. The writer identifies who is the Church today in Tonga, and what are the prophetic roles and mission of the Church against injustice.

Three Essays Related to the Church in Chuuk, Kirino Halley. These essays are written in Chuukese.

Ecumenism in Chuuk : The writer examines the difficulties and obstacles to ecumenism in Chuuk. He gives a brief synopsis of the ecumenical movement, with particular reference to the islands of Chuuk. The writer answers the questions: In what ways can the ecumenical movement be more effective in the islands of Chuuk? What are the ways in which ecumenism can be improved - is it possible to use the traditional social structures and kinship bonds of the people of Chuuk to further this work?

Leadership in Chuuk : This essay looks at the patterns of leadership of the local communities, particularly in the light of the Gospel. What are the challenges the Gospel brings to the modern-day exercise of leadership? Can contemporary leaders in the community find models for their leadership in the Gospels from Christ's teaching and example?

Family Life in Chuuk : The writer emphasises the importance of family life as the basis for society and the need to be in touch with what is happening to modern-day families in Chuuk. Of particular concern are the tensions which have surfaced for families in the urban areas involving relationships and kinship bonds, and economic support for relatives from the rural areas.

Relationship Between Theology of the Local Church in Fiji and the Columban Theology of Mission, Isimeli Cagica. The Church continually needs to take stock of itself if the response to the human and spiritual needs of people is to be relevant and appropriate. The writer explores this issue by examining the relationship between the theology of mission in the local Church of Fiji and that expressed by the Society of Saint Columban.

Chapter 1 : An exploration of the theology of the local church in Fiji is limited to the circular letters of the Archbishop, reflecting on the theology they contain and its development over the years.

Chapter 2 : This chapter studies the convention documents of the Columbans to highlight their theology of evangelisation which has guided their apostolate since the first convention in 1969, held at Lautoka, Fiji. It tries to grasp the theology behind the main themes and concepts of these documents.

Chapter 3 : The collaborative effort of the local Church and the Columban mission is discussed by comparing, contrasting and questioning the relevance and appropriateness of their responses to the needs of the local Church in Fiji and Rotuma.

Noqu Kalou Noqu Vanua (My God, My Land), Eremodo Muavesi. The aim of this project is to explore the often used quotation '*noqu kalou, noqu vanua*,' spoken in 1953 by Ratu Sukuna calling for Fijian solidarity. The researcher shows how closely the concepts of *kalou* and *vanua* are linked together in the lives of the Fijian people, then and now, and critiques these concepts from a Christian point of view.

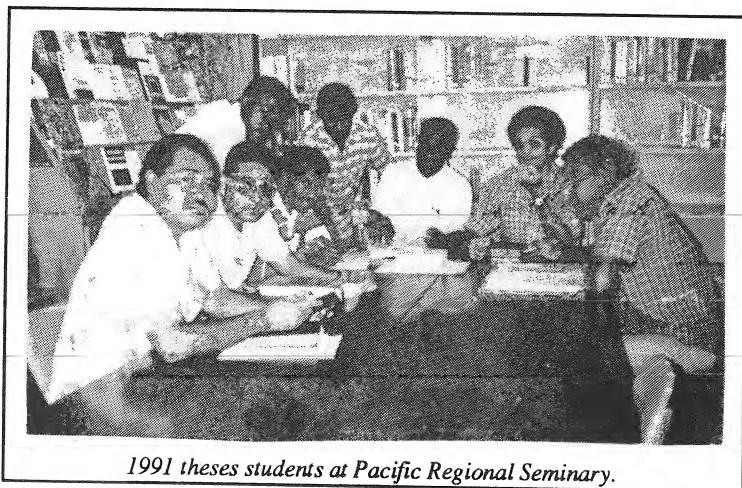
Chapter 1 : Noqu Vanua. The concept of *vanua* includes the people, the land and their religious beliefs and practices. The discussion centres on how the Fijian people find meaning in life and can come to know God through a deeper appreciation of the concept of *vanua*.

Chapter 2 : Noqu Kalou. This focuses on the gods, ancestor spirits, creator deities, spiritual beings and powers which were part of the traditional Fijian religious belief system. The discussion leads the researcher to place a positive value on knowledge of the past traditions and religious beliefs, so that one can know and believe in the true God as revealed by Jesus Christ.

Chapter 3 : This chapter critiques the expression *noqu kalou, noqu vanua*. It questions whether or not the original quotation achieves its intended aim of solidarity among Fijians in the contemporary context of Fijian society, and if it is of any help to the wider Christian community.

Chapter 4 : This chapter engages in theological reflection on what has been said above. It also searches to establish bonds and links between the *vanua* and *kalou* and to understand how the Fijians understand these concepts.

The Catechist Ministry in Fiji Today, Timoci Kolodisi. This project is focused on catechists in the Western Region of the Archdiocese of Suva. The aim of the project is to clearly identify the role of the catechist in the local Church in Fiji today.



Chapter 1 : A brief historical analysis of the work of the catechists at the beginning of the missionary era of the Church in Fiji in the 1850's. This includes the development of Navesi Catechist Centre; the formation and training programme for the catechists; and the structure of their ministry today.

Chapter 2 : This deals with the theology of lay ministry and the model of ecclesiology which was used in the past but which has undergone radical changes since the Second Vatican Council.

Chapter 3 : This is a pastoral/theological reflection evaluating the role of the catechists as instruments of evangelisation, and evaluating the present structures and formation programme for their ministry in the Church of Fiji and Rotuma.

The Faith of the Virgin Mary and Contemporary Tongan Society, Felise Tavo SM. The aim of this research is to identify the basic challenge facing the faith in contemporary Tongan society and to consider what the faith of the Virgin Mary has to offer to the Tongan Christian today.

Chapter 1 : A social analysis of present Tongan society directed towards identifying contemporary issues challenging the faith of the Christian community in Tonga.

Chapter 2 : This begins with a re-statement of the previous analysis in terms of the Biblical concept of covenant, followed by a brief description of Mary's faith as a covenant response model, portrayed in the Gospels of Luke and John.

Chapter 3 : A brief analysis of Mary's faith, in light of the traditional teachings of the Catholic Church through to the mariology emerging from the Second Vatican Council documents.

Chapter 4 : An attempt to correlate the implications of Mary's faith with Tonga's current socio-political and religious situation.

Kinship as a Channel of Evangelisation in Fiji, Rafaele Isikeli Seru. This research project examines kinship, an element of Fijian culture which has proved to be an effective vehicle for transmitting the Gospel in the life of an early Fijian Christian. It draws on the life of Eliseo Bulituraga, a villager from the Province of Ra, who was an early evangeliser among his own people towards the end of the last century. This research project is written in the Fijian language.

Chapter 1 : The life story of Eliseo Turaga collated from oral and written sources, which describes his conversion and how he shared his faith among his own relatives.

Chapter 2 : An analysis of the methods of evangelisation Eliseo employed among his own kinspeople - those who were related by traditional cultural bonds of descent and marriage (*veiwekani*).

Chapter 3 : A cultural analysis of kinship in Fiji, with particular reference to the Ra context and the fictive bonds of kinship established in the *vanua* which go beyond descent and marriage. Attention is given to the various cultural bonds in this kinship system which unite people together as an extended community.

Chapter 4 : Theological reflections on this medium of evangelisation: the role of the Holy Spirit working in this system; the Christianised social bonds within the community; the story-telling community, the believing community and evangelisation.

DOING THEOLOGY IN COMMUNITY

BOOK REVIEWS

J. Russell Chandran

Ortega, Ofelia and Chabloz, Diana, eds. *Doing Theology In Different Contexts*. Geneva : WCC Publications, 1988. 126 pp.

Amirtham, Sam, comp. *Stories Make People - Examples of Theological Work in Community*. Geneva : WCC Publications, 1989. 99 pp.

Theology is systematic reflection on faith praxis. The struggle of people in different situations to gain the fullness of life which is God's gift to His people is the context of such reflection. One of the important insights which has emerged in recent ecumenical dialogues is that this enterprise of *Doing Theology* can be meaningfully done only 'in community.' These two publications of the World Council of Churches (WCC) draw attention to this dimension of Christian Theology.

The first book is a report of a Consultation held in Prague in June, 1988, arranged by the WCC Programme on Theological Education (PTE). As explained by Sam Amirtham, the then Director of PTE, in his Prologue, the consultation was part of the concern for *contextualisation* in theological education. 'One of the ways that this can be done is to let local theologies be in dialogue with each other.' (p. 4) This consultation was on *Latin American and Eastern/Central European Theologians in Dialogue*.

The report begins with an *Introduction* by Ofelia Ortega and the final message from the consultation of churches, institutions and persons concerned with theological education. This is followed by the plenary presentations - two from Latin Americans and two from Orthodox theologians of the USSR - and reports of the theological dialogue and group discussions. The book also contains several of the background papers.

In her introduction, Ortega explains how the profiles of the two contexts are clear and sharp, the churches in most of Eastern Europe living in socialistic societies and the churches in Latin America, while dependent on western capitalist countries, struggling to move in the direction of socialistic societies. (p. 5) Obviously she is able to make this comparison because at that time the revolutionary changes in East European countries had not yet happened. The context is described as one in which some Christians and churches in Latin America are calling for radical structural changes, and *glasnost* and *perestroika* have appeared in Eastern and Central Europe. It affirms that the Gospel calls 'all Christians to solidarity with the poor and marginalised... to the struggle for justice and peace and to the promotion of equal rights among women and men of all races...' Recognising that social, economic and political systems utilise ideologies, the consultation asks theological institutions to include in their curricula the study of social structures and ideologies in order to develop critical awareness of the situation in which the pastoral ministry is to be exercised. (p. 11)

The plenary presentation by Frei Betto of Brazil was on the topic *Faith, Politics and Ideology*. The background is the struggle in Latin America for solidarity with the poor and oppressed. It is affirmed that faith is a politically embodied gift. Jesus was not politically neutral. Frei Betto reflects on the role of Marxist analysis in the Latin American struggle for justice. He observes that 'It is not Marxism that made wider Christian sectors discover the poor; it was the poor that made Christians discover Marxism.' (p. 17) His concluding affirmation, reminding us of Jesus' parable in Matthew 25, is quite powerful: 'The concrete domain of politics, with its ideological expressions, has become the new theological terrain *par excellence*... It is the poor, as sacrament of God, who in our continent are widening the frontiers of the church and making politics and ideology secular yet theological.' (p. 20) The second Latin American presentation is from Bishop Pagura of the Methodist Church in Argentina, on *Contextual Spirituality and Spiritual Training*. The spirituality relevant in Latin America is that which 'springs from practical commitment and the experience of solidarity.' (p. 29) Bishop Pagura makes us aware of the struggles of the poor (and of those, like Archbishop Romero, committed to be in solidarity with the victims of oppression) as the context for spirituality.

The two Orthodox presentations have a different orientation. One is from the Russian Orthodox Church. They both reflect situations in which the Church had no freedom to participate in the struggles of the people. However, they also bring out some valuable insights about the spirituality which springs from the

Gospel. They also provide information about theological education and spiritual formation in their churches.

The report on the dialogue between theologians and theological educators from Latin America and from the socialist countries of Europe, though rather brief, raises some interesting questions. Some traditional individualistic interpretations of salvation are rejected. At the same time, the dialogue also warns against the danger of the theology of liberation developing into an ideology, transforming the Church into a popular movement. The dialogue also raises the question of the relation between the Gospel and culture. It also notes that the Christian-Marxist dialogue in Latin America differs from what it is in the First and Second Worlds. A recommendation is made that Christians should seek to participate in the struggle for renewal of socialist society. (p. 39) The context in Eastern Europe has now radically changed and what we have there is not socialism but movements toward capitalism and market economies. The recommendation may still be relevant from a modified perspective.

Another important part of the book is the report of questions posed by the two groups to each other and also questions posed by interlocutors to both groups. Even though these questions are related to the specific contexts of the two groups, theologians and theological educators in other regions also will find them relevant. For example, the questions about the role of women, the tradition of churches reinforcing the ideology of the ruling classes, the social dimension of Christian spirituality, and the prophetic role of the Church can challenge theological education everywhere.

The second book, *Stories Make People*, draws attention to the role of people in the making of theology. The Introduction affirms that, in the same way that people need theology to give account of the hope in them, theology needs people - 'the experience and faith reflections of all believers.' The purpose of this book is to indicate how this insight helps to develop new patterns of theological education and ministerial training. While some of the articles are individual contributions, others are group stories or reports of workshops.

The first article, by Don Carrington and Johnathon Hogarth, is the report of a workshop with delegates from different Aboriginal communities of Northern Australia, arranged with the objective of beginning a process of conscientisation and community development. The report explains how the workshop was an experience of theological reflection using stories and diagrams. The academic faculty members with doctoral qualifications had set the tone of the

workshop by telling stories of 'frogs' and 'asses,' which encouraged the participants to tell stories from their own life situations. A comment by one of the participants is evidence of the effectiveness of the methodology used in the workshop: 'I am sure that the Holy Spirit was quite happy to use the faculty to help us to discover ourselves.' (p. 12) The concluding section, analysing the workshop experience, points out that the educational presuppositions of the methodology were based on Jesus' use of parables. (p. 14) The educational philosophy is described as 'narrative and praxis approaches to community development and to doing theology.' In such an approach the educator's role is 'to enter into dialogue with people about concrete community situations and offer the people instruments with which they can make their own discoveries.' (p. 13) The workshop experience was a process of 'conscientisation and empowerment of the people' which led the delegates 'to believe in their own resources and not just to get some new facts from the seminar.' (p. 15)

The report of the experience of a Bible Study group formed mostly of young women in a Swiss countryside near Geneva, reflecting on Onesimus, is a good example of re-reading the Bible from the perspective of our life situations. The neighbourhood group had the advantage of being guided by an eminent Biblical scholar and Bible study leader, U. Reugg. Every member of the group was encouraged to share her insights and as a result the whole group had quite a creative experience of Bible study and doing theology. The focus was on *A New Outlook on Family* and several important insights emerged. For example: 'Christ always brings change and an opening of possibilities... It is no longer a hierarchy... the place of the emperor has been filled by the crucified Christ... It is not only the relationship between the employees and the boss of a household that must change. It is also that of the husband and wife. There should be more of a free and responsible communion between them ... Christianity does not do away with social structures: it transforms them.' (pp. 20-22)

Under the caption *The Cross Bearers*, Selvanayagam Israel and Esther Retnaraj have described the painful experiences of an Indian housewife married to a 'devout Christian' layman who serves as a Cross Bearer in a church choir and, at the same time, is very traditional in his expectations of the wife being submissive. The report presents the women as saying, 'My story, however, has not ended. What we need from you is not sympathy, but a new interpretation,' and concludes by saying, 'Is Jesus the answer for every problem? But you see, Jesus cannot be the answer for questions which people don't ask.' (p. 28)

The report by Brian Haymes and Peter Amos on *People Training Ministers* is about an experiment in an alternative pattern of training devised by the Northern Baptist College in Manchester, England. There are three actors in the experiment: the candidate for ministerial training, Peter; a local congregation; and the theological college. Peter's theological education is in the context of active involvement in pastoral duties in the congregation. One of the issues he had to face was how to deal with a heroin addict. The members of the congregation became involved and gave support to Peter as well as to the parents of the addict in the process of restoring the boy to health. The report points out how this was an important experience for all three, the candidate, the congregation and the college, an 'experience of contextual theological training.' (p. 44)

The story of James M'namie of Malawi, written with the assistance of Rodney Hodgins under the caption *They Threw me out of the Church*, raises the question of conflict between the mainline churches following established traditions and those adopting Theological Education by Extension (TEE). According to M'namie, the issue was between 'members who practise the old things they used to practise before they entered the Christian Church' and those helped by TEE to talk of being born again and to ask 'what does it mean to follow Christ?' (p. 54) This is an issue which needs to be understood contextually and cannot be generalised. The TEE programmes have contributed much to theological education, providing an alternative to or complementing residential education in many situations. But there are also situations where TEE has been used for promoting anti-ecumenical and exclusivist theological orientations.

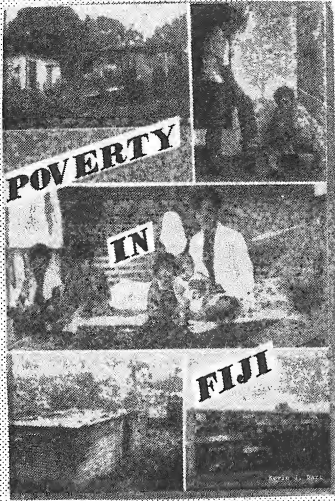
The article by Ian Fraser on *How They Read the Bible in Isolotto* is a reflection on the experience of the Basic Christian Communities in different parts of the world. 'Sometimes hierarchies and bureaucracies appreciated the development "from below,"... Sometimes hierarchies and bureaucracies did their best to ignore, isolate or eliminate such communities.' (p. 57) Giving a summary of the Bible Study of the Isolotto community in Italy, starting with Exodus and going on to the other books of the Pentateuch, Ian Fraser reflects on why this happens. He also refers to experiences of Basic Christian Communities elsewhere, such as France and the Philippines, and affirms that the hierarchies and bureaucracies need to hear the advice, 'Let go! God will provide what is needed.' (p. 62)

Theology by the Young People in Brazil is the result of reflection on the experiences of the Christian Youth Movement in South Brazil by Jaci Maraschin,

a priest of the Anglican Church who teaches theology, and Klecio dos Santos, a student of journalism. The youth had moved out of their earlier preoccupation with otherworldly spiritual issues, had become politically oriented, and were inviting the clergy to discuss political issues with them. The youth were also involved in the study of the Bible from the perspective of the new orientation. Reflection on these experiences leads to the consideration of the kind of leadership they need and the perspectives for theological education. They make the affirmation that theological education should be contextualised, should pay attention to the historical contents of the faith, and should be ecumenical. (p. 68) Doing theology in Brazil must be sensitive to the theology by the young people who are reading and studying the Bible and are convinced that any kind of ministry has to be a ministry of liberation. (p. 70)

These two books help to stimulate thinking on both the methodology of doing theology - taking seriously the complexities of the situations in which we have to affirm our faith and witness to the good news of Christ - and our corporate community commitment as basic ingredients of doing theology.

BOOK NOTE



POVERTY IN FIJI, by Kevin J. Barr, M.S.C., Fiji Forum for Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation, P. O. Box 97, Suva, Fiji.

Nobody likes to face up to unpleasant issues like poverty, but this is just what Kevin J. Barr, writing for the Fiji Forum for Justice, Peace, and the Integrity of Creation, has done in his book *Poverty in Fiji*.

Do not be put off by Barr's rather stark title. This is no catalogue of dry statistics, although the facts, the statistics and the case studies are there, giving a clear picture of the true situation in Fiji.

And do not let the cover pictures overwhelm you with sentimental pity for the less fortunate. *Poverty in Fiji* confronts the reader with the realities of poverty.

Barr admits that poverty is a complex issue and he does not attempt to oversimplify it. Rather, his book explores the subject in depth, relating what is happening in Fiji to the teachings of Christ, and going far beyond just seeking to alleviate the sufferings of the poor. He is concerned with the root causes of poverty and has much to say about economic policies, the structures of society, and the social responsibility of Christians.

This book is not for the timid or faint-hearted, nor does its message apply only to Fiji. It is a challenge to all Christians and to all governments everywhere. It seeks to awaken 'a greater sense of awareness and responsibility in the Church and in our nation for the poor around us, the reasons for their poverty, and the necessity for us to work seriously for change.'

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